

The Book of Church Order
Of

The Covenant Presbyterian Church

Containing

The Constitution

The Form of Church Government

The Book of Discipline

Published December 2016

Containing all revisions effective January 1, 2017

This page intentionally left blank.

Covenant Presbyterian Church

Constitution

Revised 2016

This page intentionally left blank.

Constitution of the Covenant Presbyterian Church

I PREFACE

We believe that our doctrine, polity, and worship are strictly regulated by Scripture. Only circumstantial matters are to be determined by the light of nature and the general rules of the Word of God. Accordingly, we profess that the principles set out in this Constitution are binding on us in the same way as are the historic confessions of faith, catechisms, and creeds of the church listed below.

II DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

A. Confessional Standard

The Covenant Presbyterian Church hereby adopts and subscribes to the Westminster Confessional Standards listed below as subordinate standards which represent the fullest expression of the teaching of the Scriptures. These documents are incorporated herein by reference.

1. **The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647)**
2. **The Westminster Larger Catechism**
3. **The Westminster Shorter Catechism**

B. Exceptions and Clarifications

1. Exceptions

a. **WCF 21:5 – Content of Worship Songs**

We allow the use of Biblically consistent hymns and spiritual songs, singing from portions of the canon of Scripture other than the Book of Psalms, and the use of musical accompaniment for the purpose of assisting congregational singing. However, every church should agree that Psalms have been set forth in God's word to be sung by His people and therefore, it is most desirable that, at a minimum, they should be incorporated into worship in the churches.

b. **WCF 25:6 – Identity of the Antichrist**

One may hold and teach within our denomination that the pope is not “that Antichrist”, as the Westminster Confession asserts, though we believe that the pope is an antichrist, and the mass is antichristian.

c. **WCF 29:7 – Worthy Receivers of the Lord’s Supper**

We add that “worthy receivers” may also include the baptized children of baptized parents who profess the true religion.

2. Clarifications

a. **WCF 1 – Nature of Scripture**

We reject higher critical teaching that denies the inerrancy of the Scripture, postulates any position which makes any portion of Scripture the product of

evolutionary development or redaction, and/or teaches that any portion of Scripture is "not profitable" for the church to teach, use, or expound today.

b. WCF 4:1 – Creation

Any position which denies a recent creation in six calendar days or results in death before the Fall, is out of accord with the Bible and the Confessions. Examples of such un-Biblical and anti-Confessional positions include: theistic evolution, uniformitarian geology, the Framework Hypothesis, and the Analogical Day View.

c. WCF 19:6-7 – Violations of the Ten Commandments

The following are considered to be violations of the Ten Commandments: abortion, infanticide, euthanasia (differentiation is maintained between actively killing by withholding food or water and removal of life support), bisexuality, homosexuality, lesbianism and all forms of artificial procreation using donors outside of the existing bonds of marriage.

d. WCF 21:8 – Lawful Recreations on the Sabbath Day

We would clarify that "recreations" does not exclude recreational fellowship of God's people on the Lord's Day.

e. WCF 23 – Distinctions of Governments: Family, Church, and Civil

The Scriptures declare that civil magistrates are instituted by God for the good of both mankind and the church. We believe that the family and the church are legitimate governments distinct from the civil magistrate. Accordingly, we reject the subordination of the family and church to the State in matters that God has placed within their particular jurisdictions. As extensions,

(i) We believe in promoting and supporting the training of our children in Christian educational institutions, especially in the home schooling method.

(ii) We organize and operate our churches under the sole authority & commission of the Lord Jesus Christ, receiving our charter from Him and not the state; as such our churches are in a parallel jurisdiction with the state, not a subsidiary relationship. It is critical that churches not infringe on state jurisdiction nor the state infringe on a church's jurisdiction. Our churches are outside the jurisdiction of the civil magistrate, are non-taxable, enjoy full rights to engage in all God ordained work (including political & legislative activity as commanded in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament), and full freedom to implement every facet of our Standards so as to be the prophetic voice of our Lord. We believe churches should not be incorporated in any way that makes the church a creature of, or subject to,

the state, or makes it an artificial person with statutory rights and duties instead of biblical rights and duties, or removes the Constitutional restraints on the state.¹

f. WCF 27:4 – Guarding the Lord's Table

All churches must practice, in some manner, a guarding ("fencing") of the Lord's Table. Presbytery will not specify beyond this mandate.

g. WCF 28:3 – Modes of Baptism

The allowable modes of baptism include sprinkling, pouring, and immersion.

h. Covenantal Theology

We adhere to a Covenantal hermeneutic of Scripture and reject Dispensationalism.

i. Non-established Practices

The following practices may vary from local church to local church but are not established by the broader assemblies. (It is understood that any member joining a local church will submit to the position of that church while a member, even if they might transfer from a church within the CPC that held differently.)

1. Specific age of communication at the Lord's Supper with the proviso that all communicants must be examined by the session and give a credible confession of faith before their 20th birthday in order to continue communing at the Lord's Table.
2. Allowable activities on the Sabbath.
3. Women teaching children in appropriate settings.
4. In situations where the regular ministry of the word is not available, which male leaders may be authorized to lead in prayer, read Scripture, and/or read sermons (or administrate authorized taped sermons).

j. Subscription

All ministers in the CPC are bound by oath to teach and practice publicly only those things found to be in accord with the Constitution (as interpreted by the exceptions and clarifications herein stated). Those received who hold different views are bound not to teach them publicly or privately, though they may be discussed within the context of a broader assembly as provided by its rules and directories.

¹ B2e(ii) Adopted in 2016. Pending final approval in 2017.

k. Vows and oaths

Self-maledictory vows and oaths to secret pagan societies (e.g. Masonic organizations) are considered to be "superstitious and sinful snares" (WCF 22:7) and therefore prohibited.

l. WCF 23:2 Right for Men to Refuse Military Service

It is allowed for Christian men to refuse to serve in the military when in the judgment of the general assembly, the military's action (including but not limited to wars declared and undeclared, police actions, any international peacekeeping missions, or sustained military engagements) is deemed unjust (1 Samuel 20; 22:1-5; Psalm 110:3; cf. the implications of the voluntarism of Deuteronomy 20:5-9; Judges 5:2).

m. WCF 23:2 Women and Compulsory Service in Government

It is not lawful for women to serve in military service, except for voluntary acts of mercy. It is not lawful for the civil government to draft women into the military or to require them to register for potential draft into civil or military service. (Deuteronomy 20:5-20; 1 Timothy 2:12; Titus 2:5; Numbers 1-2; cf. rebuke in 1 Samuel 8:13, 16; cf. implications of Numbers 30)

C. Conflict (Real or Apparent) Amongst Confessional Statements

The CPC recognizes the wisdom and usefulness of the Three Forms of Unity (the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort) and considers these standards to express the same faith as the Westminster Confessional Standards. However, where perceived or real conflicts exist between the Westminster Confessional Standards (including the Larger and Shorter Catechism) and these other Creeds listed above, the Westminster Confessional Standards shall prevail.

Covenant Presbyterian Church

Form of Church Government

Sixth Edition

Including all revisions approved through the 21st Presbytery in Scotts Valley, CA
June 1-3, 2016

This page intentionally left blank.

The Form of Church Government of the Covenant Presbyterian Church

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: The Lord Jesus Christ, The King And Covenant Head Of His Church	3
Chapter 2: The Church Of Jesus Christ.....	4
Chapter 3: The Authority of the Church	8
Chapter 4: The Unity Of The Church Of Christ.....	10
Chapter 5: Offices Of The Church Of Christ	12
Chapter 6: Elders – Pastors, Preachers, Teachers, & Bishops	13
Chapter 7: Evangelists.....	15
Chapter 8: Deacons	16
Chapter 9: The Governing Assemblies	17
Chapter 10: The Particular Church & Its Session	19
Chapter 11: The Regional Church and Its Presbytery	22
Chapter 12: The National Church and Its General Assembly.....	26
Chapter 13: The Election Of Officers	28
Chapter 14: Ordination And Installation Of Officers	30
Chapter 15: Congregational Meetings.....	33
Chapter 16: Admission Of Church Members	36
Chapter 17: Divesting From Office.....	38
Chapter 18: Examination Of Candidates For Ordination	40
Chapter 19: Organizing And Receiving Congregations	42
Chapter 20: Fraternal Relations.....	44
Chapter 21 The Governing Documents And Their Amendment.....	45
Chapter 22 Administrative Procedures.....	47
Appendix A Checklist for Church Officers	49
Appendix B Theological Questionnaire for Elder	51
Appendix C Resources for the Elder Nominee.....	59

REVISIONS

<u>Revision</u>	<u>Effective</u>	<u>Change</u>
First	Jan 1, 2009	Revised §11.5
Second	Jan 1, 2011	Added §7.3
Third	Jan 1, 2012	Revised §19
Fourth	Jan 1, 2013	Added §15.4 and §15.5
Fifth	Jan 1, 2015	Revised §2.5 and §7.5
Sixth	Jan 1, 2017	Revised §2.4

CHAPTER 1
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE KING AND COVENANT HEAD OF HIS CHURCH

SECTION 1

Jesus Christ, whose name is called wonderful Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace, is the Head of the Church

SECTION 2

Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man, rules His Church by His Word and Spirit. The pattern of officers, ordinances, government, and discipline set forth in his Word is, therefore, to be observed as the instruction of our Lord.

SECTION 3

In those circumstances not specifically ordered by Scripture, the Church must observe the general rules of the Word. Among the Biblical admonitions applicable to all circumstances are those requiring that all things must be done decently, in order, and for edification.

COMMENTARY:

Section 1: Of the increase of Jesus Christ's government and peace there shall be no end. He sits upon the throne of David to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice forever. Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God the Father, far above all principalities and powers, might, dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. Unto Him the Father has given all authority in heaven and in earth and has put all things under His feet, making Him Head over the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all.

Is. 9:6-7; Jn. 5:26-30; Acts 4:12, Col. 1:18

Section 2: Jesus Christ, having ascended into heaven, abides in His Church by the Holy Spirit whom He has sent and through whom He exerts His saving and governing power in the teaching of His Word and the administration of his ordinances. Only by the gifts and calling of the Spirit are men endued and qualified for office in Christ's Church.

Section 3: The Presbyterian form of government seeks to fulfill these scriptural requirements for the glory of God, the edification of the Church, and the enlargement of that spiritual liberty in which Christ has set us free.

CHAPTER 2
THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

SECTION 1

Jesus Christ, who is now exalted far above all principalities and powers, has established, in this world a visible Body which is His Church.

SECTION 2

The visible catholic Church consists of all those throughout the world who profess faith in Jesus Christ, together with their children, outside of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

SECTION 3

The invisible Church consists of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ from the beginning of time to the end of the ages.

SECTION 4

In accordance with the teaching of Scripture, the many members of the visible Church are to be organized in local and regional churches, confessing a common faith and submitting to a common form of government. Neither this denomination nor her member churches may be incorporated by any civil government or entity; we maintain our jurisdiction by being constituted as biblical churches.

SECTION 5

The local church is the fundamental unit of authority as governed by the Session in the Presbyterian system of government. It holds primary responsibility for the execution of these duties.

SECTION 6

The all-consuming, comprehensive goal of the Church of Christ throughout the world is to glorify God by leading men to the adoration of the glorious Trinity, to expound His revealed will in the Bible, to make visible the invisible governance of God in the world, and to testify of the defeat of Satan together with his minions, hosts, philosophies, standards, usurped governments, and works of unrighteousness. The Church must strive with utmost strength toward the attainment of such a comprehensive goal.

SECTION 7

The work of the Church, in fellowship with and obedience to Christ, includes:

- A) faithfully preaching the whole counsel of Scripture with a thorough expounding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation and the Law of God as the foundation for ethics, counsel, rule and hermeneutical principles;
- B) reading and teaching God's Word;
- C) rightfully administering the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Table;

- D) fellowshiping and encouraging one another through prayer, praise, and fasting;
- E) collecting and distributing of the tithes and offerings;
- F) showing mercy;
- G) exercising discipline;
- H) offering a public testimony of righteousness; and
- I) blessing the people.

COMMENTARY:

Section 4: Such bodies whether local, national, or international, which in their belief and practice hold fast to the historic Christian faith, which require for admission into their membership what Christ requires for salvation, and which subordinate their authority to that of the Word of God, are true Churches of Christ, despite matters not essential to the faith which may have caused their separation from others.

The following chart summarizes the key differences between the Biblical corpus and the state-made church corporation in the United States of America.

Biblical Corpus

Its creator is Christ (Matt. 16:18)

Its head is Christ (Eph. 5:23); “subject to Christ as its only sovereign” (William Cunningham)

Can this corporation exist apart from the state? Yes – Throughout the book of Acts

State Corporation

Its creator is the state. “A corporation is a creature of the state.” (Wilson v. U.S.); “a creature of the State” (Hale v. Henkel)

Its head is the state. “Corporate existence is a privilege granted by the sovereign upon compliance with specified conditions.” (Smith & Robertson; Hale v Henkel; Forest City Mfg Co v International Ladies’ Garment Workers Union); “created by the supreme power of the state” (Warner v Beers)

Can this corporation exist apart from the state? No. “a creature of the State” with State as “sovereign” giving a “franchise” “subject to the laws of the State” and its “powers are limited by law.” (Hale v Henkel)

Biblical Corpus

Was the state's permission needed? No. See book of Acts. "It does not appear that the prince's consent was necessary to be actually given to the foundation of them."

(Blackstone)

Does it have God-given rights irrevocable by the state? Yes (Acts 5:29; etc)

Incorporated by Christ for the glory of God and the extension of His kingdom, not the "good" of the public. (Eph. 4:4-16)

Incorporated by the grace of God. (Eph. 4:4-16) and the power of the Spirit (1Cor. 12:13)

It is regulated by Scripture alone

It existed before there was a state and will outlive the state.

In Acts it existed despite state disapproval.

State Corporation

Was the state's permission needed? Yes. In England: "the king's consent is absolutely necessary to the erection of any corporation..." (Blackstone). In America: "Its rights to act as a corporation are only preserved to it so long as it obeys the laws of its creation." (Wilson v. U.S.); "legal entity created by or under the authority of the laws of a state." (Black's Law Dict.)

Does it have God-given rights irrevocable by the state? No "Corporate existence is a privilege granted by the sovereign upon compliance with specified conditions." (Smith & Robertson); "an artificial person without natural rights" (Bassen v Monckton)

"It is presumed to be incorporated for the benefit of the public." (Hale v. Henkel)

Incorporated "by the grace of the state" (J. P. Davis, *Corporations*) and "has only such powers as the State has conferred upon it." (Smith & Roberston)

It is regulated by state law. "It receives certain special privileges and franchises and holds them *subject to the laws of the state and the limitation of its charter. Its powers are limited by law.* It can make no contract not authorized by its charter..." (Hale v. Henkel, emphasis mine)

It is "*created by statute as a legal entity*" (Black's Law Dictionary)

"To acquire the status of artificial or legal personality, the group seeking it must be incorporated, *i.e., must obtain a formal state license.*" (Warren Co. v. Heister)

Biblical Corpus

Does not artificially distinguish between church corporate (money, buildings, voting, etc) and church spiritual (Gospel, prayer, etc)

Has powers, rights, capacities prior to any state action (Acts)

Was persecuted under Roman emperors in the first three centuries simply for existing.

No limited liability under this corporation.

Does not need to apply to the state with paperwork to exist.

Is not subject to internal regulation from the outside.

State Corporation

Does artificially distinguish between church corporate (money, buildings, voting, etc) and church spiritual (Gospel, prayer, etc). “a distinction between ‘spiritual’ entity, the ‘church,’ and a ‘temporal’ entity, the ‘society,’ which exist in a kind of hypostatic union, the one governed by denominational custom, the other by state law.” (Rodes)

Only “after a corporation is so formed [by the state] and named, it acquires many powers, rights, capacities, and incapacities, which we are next to consider.” (Blackstone); “A corporation derives its existence and all of its powers from the State and, therefore, has only such powers as the State has conferred upon it.” (Smith & Roberson)

Was not persecuted under Roman emperors in the first three centuries for existing. It would have violated the church’s conscience to succumb to Rome’s requirements for this corporation.

There is limited liability under this corporation.

Does need to apply to the state with paperwork to exist.

Is subject to internal regulation by the state.

CHAPTER 3
THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH

SECTION 1

The Church has such authority as is given to her by her Head, Jesus Christ. This authority is vested in the Elders of the Church who have been duly ordained by the laying on of hands of Presbytery.

SECTION 2

The Presbytery shall consider candidates for ordination who have been nominated by a Session or higher body. With regard to mission works, Presbytery may also consider candidates who have been nominated by the Session of a Sponsoring Church.

SECTION 3

All Church power is ministerial and declarative and is to be exercised solely and exclusively within the bounds and limitations set forth in Holy Scripture. Church power is neither independent nor sovereign in its exercise.

SECTION 4

The Elders of the Particular Church are the only governors of the Particular Church and, corporately, are called the Congregational Presbytery, or Session of the Church.

SECTION 5

The members of the Session alone are to represent the Particular Church at Presbytery and General Assembly.

SECTION 6

No Church officers or judicatories possess any civil jurisdiction. No civil penalties derived from the culture at large may be inflicted in a Church court or by Church officers. No aid from a civil authority may be sought by any officer or authority in the Presbyterian system in the exercise of their jurisdiction further than may be necessary for civil protection and security.

SECTION 7

Presbytery may not lay claim to the properties, lands, buildings, parsonages or other assets owned by the individual churches, members, or officers. No act of discipline (or otherwise) of Presbytery may be construed as a claim to the title, ownership of the properties, lands, buildings, parsonages or other assets owned by the individual churches, members, or officers.

SECTION 8

Church government is a valid and authentic jurisdiction, derived from God's Word, and every member is commanded by God to submit to its authority as an obedience offered to Christ.

COMMENTARY:

Section 1: Each believer-priest is endued with the Spirit of the Living God and is called by Christ to join in the worship, edification and testimony of the Church. Each local church functions and grows as part of the Body of Christ, fitly-framed and fashioned together, according to the working of Him who works in every member to supply a due measure of each part.

Sections 3-4: The government of the Church by Elders is a New Testament ordinance. The jurisdiction of Elders in Presbyterian assemblies and wider courts is set forth in the New Testament. The organization of courts, both courts of original jurisdiction and wider courts of appellate jurisdiction, is set forth in the Word of God. Such courts are empowered to adjudicate according to the derived authority they have received from the Covenant Head of the Church, Jesus Christ.

Section 5: God alone is Lord of the conscience, and has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, if anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, in matters of faith, or worship. Scripture alone is the only infallible and inerrant rule of faith and practice. No Church authority may adjudicate matters on the basis of its own man-made rules and authority.

Section 8: God has ordained that persons are tested by God by the manner in which they respond to their neighbor, in general, and to derived authority in particular. This includes the Church's authority and government, as well as civil government and parental authority. Therefore, if the decisions of the Church officers are rendered according to the precepts of Scripture then they "are to be received with reverence and submission; not only for their agreement with the Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in His Word." (WCF 31, 2)

CHAPTER 4
THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

SECTION 1

The Church is the Body of Christ. As such, true believers are one with their Head and are one with each other. This unity has been brought about through the work of Christ, Who has reconciled us to God through the cross; and, the power and operation of the Holy Spirit, Who has baptized us into Christ, making us to be one new man.

SECTION 2

Christians must, as faithful stewards, utilize the gifts given to them for the edification of the Church.

SECTION 3

Although the visible Church has, in God's providence, become divided into bodies commonly termed denominations or churches; and, although this division has obscured the visible unity of the Body of Christ; there is, nevertheless, one body, one Spirit, one hope, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Church to both desire and work diligently towards the visible manifestation of this unity before the eyes of the watching world.

SECTION 4

Such bodies, whether local, national, or international, are to be recognized as true churches of Christ which:

- A) in their belief and practice hold fast to the historic Christian faith as expressed in such creeds as the Nicene Creed of 381AD
- B) require for admission into their membership what Christ requires for salvation
- C) subordinate their authority to the Word of God, and
- D) maintain through sufficient discipline the Word and sacraments in their fundamental integrity.

SECTION 5

Communion and fellowship with those who teach or promote false doctrine is spiritual adultery and an offense against Christ's Church.

SECTION 6

It is the right and duty of those who rule in the Church of God to maintain order and exercise discipline, for the preservation both of truth and unity.

SECTION 7

Church officers, together with the congregation, must censure or cast out the erroneous, scandalous, and apostate, while always observing the requirements of the

Word of God and the due process of the Book of Church Discipline, and seeking the honor of Christ's name, the good of His Church, and the reclamation of the offender.

COMMENTARY:

Section 4: It is our desire and willingness to hold Christian fellowship with all other such branches of the Church. It is our further desire and willingness to be united in government with all who can subscribe to the Westminster Standards as articulated in our Constitution.

Section 5: Since apostasy in faith and life is destructive of the union the Church enjoys with Christ, fellowship can be maintained only by turning away from such errors and separating from the many antichrists, false apostles and teachers who promote and practice them. Communion with such is spiritual adultery and an offense against Christ and his saints.

CHAPTER 5
OFFICES OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

SECTION 1

The New Testament Church of Christ is established upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles. When their testimony was completed, the apostolic and prophetic offices ceased together with their revelatory powers and signs.

SECTION 2

Our Lord continues to build his Church through the ministry of men whom he calls and endues with special gifts for teaching, ruling, and serving. Some of these special gifts can be most profitably exercised only when those who possess them have been publicly recognized as called of Christ to minister with them.

SECTION 3

It is proper to speak of such a publicly recognized function as an office.

SECTION 4

The ordinary and perpetual offices in the local Church are the Elder and the Deacon. Within the economy of the office of Elder, there are two distinctive functions. They are the ministry of the Word and prayer and sacrament (preaching, teaching, and the administration of the sacraments) and governing.

SECTION 5

The office of Deacon is that office established by Christ which administers works of mercy and service on behalf of the Church.

COMMENTARY:

Section 4: The office of Elder embodies many other titles and administration in Scripture. These include evangelist, pastor, teacher, and bishop. There is a diversity of ministry within any office, for every man is called to be a steward of his own gifts.

.

CHAPTER 6
ELDERS – PASTORS, PREACHERS, TEACHERS, & BISHOPS

SECTION 1

The Elder, also called Pastor, Bishop, Preacher, and Teacher in the New Testament, is an ordinary and perpetual officer in the Church.

SECTION 2

Every member of Presbytery shall be an Elder in a local congregation of that Presbytery.

SECTION 3

It belongs to the office of the Elder:

- A) to read the Scriptures publicly;
- B) to lead the congregation in public worship;
- C) to preach and teach the Word;
- D) to exhort and convince by sound doctrine those who contradict;
- E) to bring Scripture to bear upon the conscience by reproving, exhorting, and comforting;
- F) to pray regularly with and for the congregation, especially the sick;
- G) to administer the sacraments on a regular basis;
- H) to bless the people from God;
- I) to help the needy;
- J) to represent the Church before Presbyterian assemblies; and
- K) to counsel civil magistrates when requested to do so.

SECTION 4

Seeing that God has given gifts in different proportions to different men, it is not expected that every Elder will possess all these gifts to the same degree.

SECTION 5

Elders shall meet the requirements listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. An Elder should be sound in the faith, possess competency in human learning, and be able to teach and rule others; he should be known as a sober minded man, having wisdom and discretion; he should exhibit the dignity of a holy life and exemplary rule in his house; and he should have a good report of those who are without.

SECTION 6

While all Elders are authorized to and must be capable of preaching and administering the sacraments, in recognition of the skill that can be attained through weekly preaching (and its resulting benefit to the congregation) and of the dedicated labor required to

attain this skill, each Session may select one Elder to regularly fill the pulpit and administer the sacraments. It is wise and fitting that a Particular Church should, to whatever extent is deemed necessary, financially and otherwise support an Elder who serves in this capacity.

SECTION 7

Every candidate for office shall set forth in writing any exceptions/scruples he has that are not already allowed by the constitution and be prepared to abide by the provisions of the Form of Church Government regarding exceptions to the Confession.

COMMENTARY:

Section 5: Churches are strongly urged to use the *Checklist for Church Officers* found in Appendix A as part of the process for examining and determining the qualifications for Elders who are seeking ordination or transfer into a Presbytery.

Section 6: All Elders must be apt to teach and able to refute those who contradict, and therefore must be thoroughly familiar with the whole counsel of God, the doctrine taught in the Westminster Standards, and should be able to deal with all the questions and issues in the *Questionnaire for Elder Candidates and Transferring Elders* found in Appendix B to the satisfaction of the Presbytery.

CHAPTER 7
EVANGELISTS

SECTION 1

Evangelists are Elders who, though belonging to the Session of a Particular Church, often preach the Word, administer the sacraments and undertake all the functions that belong to the office of Elder away from his Particular Church.

SECTION 2

In the case where the Evangelist is working to develop a new congregation, the Evangelist shall continue in a place until a regular congregation has been established.

SECTION 3

An evangelist may be called, sent and be accountable to presbytery until such time as they are received into a particular church. The reception by the local church must occur within one year. If a local reception does not occur within a year, the disposition of the evangelist would be determined at the next stated meeting of presbytery.

SECTION 4

As an Elder, the Evangelist is authorized to perform the following functions:

- A) labor in home or foreign mission fields;
- B) serve as chaplain in the armed forces or other institutions;
- C) serve as stated pulpit supply or special preacher to the Churches; or
- D) serve as an editor or similar ministry involving media communications.

SECTION 5

An evangelist need not be a voting member of the local session. An evangelist who is not a member of a local CPC congregation is a non-voting member of presbytery.

COMMENTARY:

Section 1: Based upon the qualifications for elder, an Evangelist shall normally be a member of a CPC church. However an evangelist and his family may join the membership of a church of like faith and practice if serving in an area where there is not a particular CPC church.

Section 5: This section does not apply to, or change the voting status of, any evangelist of the CPC called before Jan 1, 2015.

CHAPTER 8
DEACONS

SECTION 1

The office of the Deacon is called to the ministry of mercy and special service of the local Church. Works of mercy include the care of members of the Church who stand destitute of help, especially qualified widows, as well as individuals who are unable to function on their own behalf due to mental or physical debilitation, and have not the care needed, especially by their families. Special service would include ministry intended to relieve the Elders from responsibilities which distract them from giving themselves to prayer, and the ministry of the Word. Such ministry would include administrative and financial service, and ministry to the saints.

SECTION 2

The Session is responsible for oversight of the Deacons and shall direct their work, both outside the Church with respect to the poor, and within the Church with respect to the local congregation and ministry.

SECTION 3

The Deacon is nominated and appointed by a process approved by the Session. Churches are urged to use the checklist in Appendix A as part of their qualification and examination process for Deacons.

SECTION 4

Every candidate for office shall set forth in writing any exceptions/scruples he has that are not already allowed by Constitution and shall be prepared to abide by the provisions of the Form of Church Government regarding them.

SECTION 5

The Session shall determine the work and priorities of the Deacons as well as the frequency and manner of diaconal meetings and record-keeping.

CHAPTER 9
THE GOVERNING ASSEMBLIES

SECTION 1

All Elders are under the oversight of the local Session, rather than primarily under the oversight of regional or national Presbyteries. All matters pertaining to an Elder's calling and person are the concern of the local Session which has original jurisdiction, except in matters of doctrine or teaching where the Presbytery shall have original jurisdiction.

SECTION 2

The primary purpose of governing assemblies within the Presbyterian system is to strengthen the peace, purity and unity of the Church by opposing heresy and sinful practices.

SECTION 3

The Presbytery only exercises such authority as is delegated to it by this Form of Church Government or by the General Assembly from time to time.

SECTION 4

Disputed matters of doctrine and discipline may be referred to a broader assembly for adjudication. No sentence shall be executed until all appeals have been exhausted.

SECTION 5

Presbyteries have the right to appoint committees or special commissions and delegate to them specific interim powers when necessary.

SECTION 6

The time limit of specific interim powers is not to exceed 2 years for any assembly broader than the Session.

SECTION 7

Membership on Presbytery committees need not be limited to the membership of the appointing assembly but must be limited to membership of the CPC at large. Only men holding the office of Elder have the authority to adjudicate.

SECTION 8

Regional Presbyteries shall convene no less than twice per year.

SECTION 9

Robert's Rules of Order, 1915 edition, will be followed by all governing bodies, except where they are contradicted by the Scriptures, the Westminster Standards, the Constitution of the CPC, or this document.

SECTION 10

Any claim or dispute arising from or related to membership in the CPC shall be settled by mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration in accordance with the Rules

of Procedure for Christian Conciliation of the Institute for Christian Conciliation. Judgment upon an arbitration decision may be entered in any court otherwise having jurisdiction. The parties understand that these methods shall be the sole remedy for any controversy or claim arising out of such membership and expressly waive their right to file a lawsuit in any civil court against one another for such disputes, except to enforce an arbitration decision.

CHAPTER 10
THE PARTICULAR CHURCH & ITS SESSION

SECTION 1

A Particular Church consists of a definite company of Christians organized as a distinct congregation with its officers.

SECTION 2

A Particular Church must not be less than three (3) covenant heads at least two of whom are ordained Elders.

SECTION 3

Two or more local congregations may be associated together under the government of a single Session, with the provision that there must be at least one Elder in number for every separate congregation.

SECTION 4

The membership of a local congregation consists of those who have made a credible profession of faith; have been baptized; and, have been enrolled and admitted to all the rights of Church membership by the Session. Church membership shall also include the baptized children of members.

SECTION 5

The Session, which is the governing body of the Particular Church, shall consist of all Elders who have been duly ordained by Presbytery. It shall choose its own Moderator annually from among its members. The number of Elders is to be determined by taking into account the needs of the congregation and the number of those to whom Christ has given the gifts required for such offices.

SECTION 6

The Session shall convene at the call of the Moderator, the Presbytery, or any two members of the Session. In no case may the Session hold a meeting without attempting to notify all members.

SECTION 7

The Session is charged with maintaining the government of the congregation. It shall oversee all matters concerning the conduct of public worship including:

- A) the preaching of the Church;
- B) the spiritual growth and evangelistic witness of the congregation;
- C) the discipline of members of the Particular Church;
- D) the activities of the Diaconate, and
- E) all other functions of the congregation.

SECTION 8

The Session shall have final authority over the use of Particular Church property.

SECTION 9

The Session shall appoint Elders to higher assemblies.

SECTION 10

The Session shall ensure that only Elders ordained and installed in the CPC, Elders from churches of like faith and practice, or men who are under care and oversight of a Session of a CPC church are allowed to preach, and that such preaching would not contradict the teaching or practice of the CPC.

SECTION 11

The Session shall keep the following records:

- A) minutes of its meetings;
- B) minutes of the meetings of the congregation; and
- C) rolls of the members of the congregation, both of professing members and of their baptized children, with the dates of their reception. Such rolls shall designate those members worshipping with a mission work. Births, baptisms, censures, restorations, deaths, transfers, and removals shall be noted on these rolls.

SECTION 12

The Session shall submit its minutes and the minutes of the congregation to the Presbytery for review at least once every year.

SECTION 13

The names of members shall be placed upon or removed from the rolls of the Particular Church only by order of the Session, and according to the provisions of the Book of Discipline.

SECTION 14

If, upon request, the Session dismisses a member to another congregation, the clerk shall send a letter commending him to its care, and the clerk of the receiving church shall notify the dismissing church of the date of his reception. When notification is received the clerk shall remove the member's name from the roll and record the fact in the minutes.

SECTION 15

Should a member desire dismissal to a church of which the Session cannot approve, and the member cannot be dissuaded, the Session shall grant him a certificate of standing, unless the Session institutes disciplinary action against him. Upon being informed that he has joined such a church the clerk shall erase his name from the roll.

SECTION 16

Visitors and non-members who are scandalous in conduct or are perceived as a danger to the flock may, upon credible testimony of evidence or witnesses, be confronted by the Session and exhorted not to further attend so as not to disturb the peace of the Church until they repent of their scandalous conduct.

SECTION 17

If a Session shall cease to exist or become so small as to prevent it from working effectively, the Presbytery shall provide for an election and ordination of Elders from within the congregation; or the Presbytery, with the consent of the congregation, may appoint Elders normally from within the same Presbytery, to be an acting Session or to augment the existing Session temporarily.

CHAPTER 11
THE REGIONAL CHURCH AND ITS PRESBYTERY

SECTION 1

A regional Church consists of all the members of the Particular and Mission congregations and the Elders within a certain district. The General Assembly may organize a regional Church when there are at least three congregations and/or six Elders within a region.

SECTION 2

The Presbytery is the governing body of a regional Church. It consists of all the Elders of the congregations of the regional Church.

SECTION 3

Meetings of the Presbytery shall be composed, insofar as possible, of two Elders from each congregation commissioned by the respective Sessions. Any four presbyters, being met at the time and place appointed, shall be a quorum.

SECTION 4

Ordinarily, Presbytery meetings will be convened by one of the member congregations on a rotating basis, with all Particular Churches having an opportunity to convene Presbytery before any Particular Church has a subsequent opportunity to do the same.

SECTION 5

The last action of each Presbytery meeting shall be to appoint a Moderator and Stated Clerk and determine the location of the next convening presbytery.

SECTION 6

If the standing Moderator and/or Stated Clerk is unable to attend the Presbytery meeting, a Stated Clerk and/or a Moderator may be appointed from among the other members in attendance.

SECTION 7

The Moderator has no power when Presbytery is not in Session except to call meetings and bring them to order.

SECTION 8

The standing Moderator, or, in the case of his absence, death, or inability to act, the Stated Clerk, shall, at the request of any four (4) Elders, the Elders being of at least two different congregations, call a special meeting. The Moderator or the Stated Clerk, as the case may be, if otherwise qualified to do so, may be one of those making the request. For this purpose a circular letter, email, or fax, specifying the particular business of the intended meeting, shall be sent to the Moderator and Stated Clerk of every Session under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery, at least ten days prior to the

meeting. Nothing shall be transacted at special meetings besides the particular business for which the judicatory has been convened.

SECTION 9

The Presbytery has the power to order whatever pertains to the spiritual welfare of the Particular and Mission Churches under its care, always respecting the liberties guaranteed to the individual congregations under the Constitution, the Form of Church Government, and the Book of Discipline.

SECTION 10

In the exercise of its jurisdiction the Presbytery has responsibility for evangelism within the bounds of its region, especially in areas which are not within the sphere of service in any one congregation. Similarly the Presbytery shall seek to foster fellowship in worship and nurture in the Church as a whole within its region.

SECTION 11

The Presbytery has the power to organize and receive congregations, and, at the request of the people and with the advice of the Sessions involved, to visit Particular and Mission Churches for the purpose of inquiring into their state and of taking proper measures to ensure that evils which may have arisen in them shall be redressed.

SECTION 12

Presbytery shall examine and approve or censure the records of Particular and Mission Church Sessions.

SECTION 13

The Presbytery has power to:

- A) receive and issue all appeals, and other matters, that are brought before it from church Sessions in a regular manner, subject to the provisions of the Book of Church Discipline;
- B) resolve questions of doctrine or discipline seriously and reasonably proposed;
- C) condemn erroneous opinions which injure the purity or peace of the Church;
- D) examine candidates for the office of Elder;
- E) ordain, install, and remove Elders in accordance with the Form of Church Government and Book of Church Discipline; and
- F) bring charges to any church Session regarding an individual, or to itself if it involves an entire Session.

SECTION 14

It shall be the duty of the Presbytery to keep an accurate record of its proceedings and to submit this record to the General Assembly for examination at least once each year. The Presbytery shall also report to the General Assembly each year the ordinations, the

receiving or dismissing of members, the removal of members by death, the organization, reception, union, or dissolution of congregations, or the formation of new ones, and in general, all the important changes which have taken place within its bounds in the course of the year.

SECTION 15

Each day's meetings shall be opened and closed with prayer.

SECTION 16

Uncommissioned Elders of the regional Church may be seated as voting members, provided the majority of commissioned members do not object. Presbyters in good standing in other Presbyteries or in churches of like faith and practice, who may be present, may be invited to sit with the Presbytery as corresponding members. Such members shall be entitled to deliberate and advise, but not to vote in any decisions of the Presbytery.

SECTION 17

Any Elder who is not actively serving on the Session of a Particular or Mission Church in the Presbytery may not be seated as a voting member.

SECTION 18

Presbytery meetings may incorporate or be conducted by conference call and/or video conferencing provided a majority of those present do not object. Such a motion may be made at any point during the meeting and will be considered before any other motions currently on the table. If carried, this motion tables all questions currently being debated and requires immediate adjournment. Any motion other than adjournment is out of order. All voting will be by roll call. Any motions so carried, including those carried prior to an objection motion, must be read at the next regularly scheduled meeting and are subject to reconsideration.

SECTION 19

Presbytery will meet at least twice per year. At least one of these meetings must be in person. Presbyters not present at in-person meetings may not vote. However, if Presbytery establishes such capability, they may attend by conference call and participate in discussion. Presbytery is under no obligation to establish such capability.

SECTION 20

Each regional Presbytery meeting will be opened by the standing Moderator. The standing Stated Clerk has responsibility to create the docket for the meeting and write the short report. The docket order will ordinarily be as follows:

- A) Call to Order
- B) Opening in Prayer
- C) Devotion

- D) Singing of a Psalm or song
- E) Roll Call of members, guests and observers
- F) Declaration of Quorum
- G) Communications from non-attendees
- H) Review and approval of former meeting's minutes
- I) Reports from the churches including matter of prayer
- J) Prayer for all the churches
- K) Docket presentation, orders of the day and adoption
- L) Deliberation of the adopted docket
- M) Additional Business
- N) Website changes approved in light of business at this meeting
- O) Reading and approval of the short report
- P) Determining next date and convening Particular Church responsible for the next meeting
- Q) Election of new Moderator and Stated Clerk
- R) Adjournment & Prayer

The Moderator will conduct his duties until the meeting is adjourned and then his duties shall pass to the newly elected Moderator.

CHAPTER 12
THE NATIONAL CHURCH AND ITS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SECTION 1

The national Church consists of all the members of its regional Churches.

SECTION 2

The General Assembly shall consist of not more than one hundred and fifty voting commissioners, including the Moderator and Stated Clerk of the previous Assembly and such Elders as are commissioned by the respective Presbyteries in accordance with proportions determined by a previous General Assembly.

SECTION 3

The General Assembly shall meet at least once in every year. This meeting will be in person.

SECTION 4

On the day appointed for the purpose the Moderator of the preceding Assembly shall open the meeting and preside until a new Moderator is chosen. In the event of his absence the member present who was last elected Moderator of the General Assembly shall preside in his place.

SECTION 5

Each commissioner shall present his credentials to the clerk of the Assembly. Any twenty of these commissioners shall be a quorum for the transaction of business. If there are less than 150 commissioners, a quorum shall consist of the greatest of 5% of the commissioners of at least three (3) Elders. No commissioner shall have a right to deliberate or vote in the Assembly until he has been enrolled.

SECTION 6

The Moderator of the preceding Assembly, or an Elder appointed by him in his place, shall preach a sermon at the opening of the General Assembly. Each Session of the Assembly shall be opened with prayer.

SECTION 7

When the whole business of the Assembly is finished, and the vote taken for dissolving the present Assembly, the Moderator shall say from the chair, "By virtue of the authority delegated to me by the Church, let this General Assembly be dissolved, and I do hereby dissolve it, and require another General Assembly, chosen in the same manner, to meet at _____ on the _____ day of _____ A.D. _____," after which he shall pray and return thanks, and the apostolic benediction shall be pronounced.

SECTION 8

When any emergency shall require the calling of a General Assembly sooner than the time specified by the previous assembly, the Moderator of the previous Assembly, or in the case of his absence, death, or inability to act, the Stated Clerk, at the request of at least three (3) Sessions from at least two (2) Presbyteries shall call a special General Assembly. The Moderator or the Stated Clerk, as the case may be, if otherwise qualified to do so, may be one of those making the request. For this purpose a circular letter, email, or fax, specifying the particular business of the intended meeting, shall be sent to the Moderator and the Clerk of every Session at least twenty days prior to the meeting. Nothing shall be transacted at such special meeting except the particular business for which the Assembly has been convened.

SECTION 9

The General Assembly shall seek to advance the worship, edification, and witness of the whole Church. It shall seek to resolve all doctrinal and disciplinary questions regularly brought before it from the regional assemblies. It shall seek to promote the unity of the Church of Christ through correspondence with other churches.

SECTION 10

The duties peculiar to the General Assembly include:

- A) organizing regional Churches;
- B) reviewing the records of the Presbyteries;
- C) hearing any cases appealed to it; and
- D) seeking to promote the unity of the visible Church by pursuing union with other like-minded churches

SECTION 11

Any commitments and agreements made to other churches or assemblies outside the CPC must be approved by a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the General Assembly.

SECTION 12

The General Assembly is not invested with power, by virtue of its own authority, to make pronouncements that bind the conscience of the members of the Church. Yet the deliverances of the General Assembly, if declarative of the Word of God, are to be received with deference and submission not only because of their fidelity to the Word of God but also because of the nature of the General Assembly as the widest judicatory of the Church. Deliverances, resolutions, overtures, and other actions which have the effect of amending or adding to the subordinate standards shall not be binding unless they have been approved by the General Assembly and Presbyteries in the manner provided in this Form of Church Government for the amendment of the Constitution.

CHAPTER 13
THE ELECTION OF OFFICERS

SECTION 1

Every Particular Church shall nominate its Elders and Deacons, except in extraordinary circumstances.

SECTION 2

Recommendations of particular men for office may be submitted, in written form, by any voting member of the Church, or by a broader Presbytery, to the Session for consideration at any time. The Session is required to note in its minutes the disposition of all nominations.

SECTION 3

The Session alone has power to present men as nominees for office in that local congregation. Such men must be approved by a majority of the congregation before ordination and installation in their respective offices. No man can be placed over a church in any office without the consent of that particular congregation. The Session will determine the means of congregational consent.

SECTION 4

In order that these sacred offices not be committed to weak or unworthy men, and that the congregations shall have an opportunity to form a better judgment respecting the gifts of those by whom they are to be governed and served, no one shall normally be eligible for election to office until he has:

- A) been a member in good standing for at least one year;
- B) received appropriate training under the direction of or with the approval of the Session; and
- C) served the Church in ways that evidence his gifts for the office.

SECTION 5

Men of ability and piety in the congregation shall be encouraged by the Session to prepare themselves for the offices of Elder or Deacon.

SECTION 6

For Elders, exceptions to the service and time requirements of Section 4 should be noted in the Session's recommendation to Presbytery along with supporting evidence to show how the Session has assured itself of the necessity for the exception.

SECTION 7

Examinations for Elders and Deacons should be theological and pastoral, reflective of the Biblical qualifications required of them.

SECTION 8

Upon receiving the consent of the congregation, the Session shall recommend the Elder candidate to the Presbytery and request that he be examined. The recommendation should note his formal and informal training, degree of proficiency in the original languages, gifts, and graces that have led the Session to recommend him.

SECTION 9

If the examination of candidates is referred to a committee, an examination shall also be held on the floor of Presbytery. If one-fourth or more of the Presbyters present at the meeting are dissatisfied with the examination, the candidate shall be required to continue the examination at a future meeting of the Presbytery.

SECTION 10

The calling to office for an Elder or Deacon will be for the length of time that the officer remains a member in good standing of the Particular Church that recommended him, or until he petitions the Session for relief of his office and that with good cause.

COMMENTARY

Section 6: Exceptions to service and time would include situations such as a Particular Church calling an outside Vocational Elder or possibly a new church forming without an ordained Teaching Elder.

CHAPTER 14
ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

SECTION 1

It being manifest by the Word of God that no man ought to take upon himself the office of Elder or Deacon, the Church shall set men apart by solemn act for its service.

SECTION 2

Ordination is that act by which men are set apart to the offices of Elder and Deacon. It is the Church's solemn approval of and public attestation to a man's inward call, his gifts, and his calling by the Church.

SECTION 3

The Church shall vest a man in an office only when satisfied as to his gifts and character and only in response to a call by a Particular Church to that specific office.

SECTION 4

The ordaining body, before vesting a man with office, shall provide, or assure itself that he has received, such training and testing of gifts as may be necessary for the proper performance of the duties required by the office.

SECTION 5

Ordination shall be performed by the body which examines the candidate. In the case of Deacons it shall be by the Session, except that when a congregation is without a Session the Presbytery shall ordain such officers as have been nominated by the Particular Church and approved by the Presbytery. In the case of Elders ordination shall be by the Presbytery.

SECTION 6

Installation is the act by which a person who has been chosen to perform official work in the Church, having been ordained, is placed in position to do that work.

SECTION 7

When an Elder candidate of this Church is to be ordained and installed, or an Elder who has been previously ordained is to be installed, the service may be performed either by the Presbytery or by a committee appointed for that purpose, as may appear most expedient; and the following order shall be observed therein:

- A) at the time for ordination and installation the Moderator of the Presbytery, or another appointed in his place, shall preside over the meeting of the Presbytery, with the congregation present;
- B) an Elder previously appointed shall preach a sermon appropriate to the occasion;
- C) the Moderator shall briefly inform the congregation of the proceedings of the Presbytery preparatory to this occasion;

- D) addressing the candidate, the Moderator shall propose to him the following questions:
- a. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
 - b. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?
 - c. Do you approve of the government, discipline, and worship of the CPC?
 - d. Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?
 - e. Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the Elder from love to God and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the gospel of his Son?
 - f. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel and the purity, the peace, and the unity of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?
 - g. Do you promise to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private and personal duties which become you as a Christian, endeavoring to adorn the profession of the gospel by your life, and walking with exemplary piety before the flock over which God shall make you overseer?
 - h. Do you solemnly promise that, by the assistance of the grace of God, you will endeavor faithfully to discharge all the duties of an Elder to this congregation, and that you will be careful to maintain a deportment in all respects becoming an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ?
- E) The candidate having answered these questions in the affirmative, the Moderator shall propose to the people the following question, to which they shall answer in the affirmative by holding up their right hands: Do you, the members of this Church, acknowledge and receive this brother as an Elder, and do you promise to yield him all that honor, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord, to which his office, according to the Word of God and the Constitution of this Church, entitles him?
- F) If these questions have been satisfactorily answered, the candidate shall then kneel, and by prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, according to the apostolic example, he shall be solemnly ordained to the holy office of Elder. (If an Elder has been previously ordained, this step is omitted).
- G) Prayer being ended, he shall rise and the Moderator shall declare him to be ordained an Elder. (If an Elder has been previously ordained, this step is omitted).
- H) The Presbytery shall then extend to him the right hand of fellowship.
- I) When there is an existing Session, it is proper that the members of that body, in the face of the congregation, take the newly ordained (and/or installed) Elder by the

hand, saying, in words to this purpose, "We give you the right hand of fellowship, to take part in this office with us."

- J) The Moderator, or others appointed for the purpose, shall give solemn charges in the name of God to the newly ordained (or installed) Elder and to the people, to persevere in the discharge of their mutual duties, and shall, by prayer, commend them both to the grace of God and his holy keeping. At the conclusion of the service the new Elder shall dismiss the congregation with a benediction.

SECTION 8

When an officer, by reason of advanced age or disability, retires or is retired from the Session, the Session, in recognition of his long and/or meritorious service, may designate him "emeritus" with the title of his previous service.

CHAPTER 15
CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

SECTION 1

Meetings of the congregation shall be called by the Session. A stated meeting shall be held at least once annually to consider the affairs of the congregation. Other meetings shall be called when the Session deems it to be for the best interests of the congregation or when requested in writing to do so by a majority of the voting members of the congregation in good and regular standing.

SECTION 2

The provisions of Section 1 of this Chapter shall apply to a mission work which may hold a congregational meeting in its area when duly called by its Session or Presbytery. Such a congregational meeting may be held when at least one member of the Session is present and when a quorum of voting members of the mission work as designated by the Session is present.

SECTION 3

Public notice of a meeting of the congregation shall be made at the worship services on the two Lord's Days prior to the meeting or by circular letter at least ten days prior to the meeting. When the meeting is called for the transaction of specific matters of business, no business shall be conducted except that which is stated in the notice. Exceptions to this Section shall be noted in the Constitutions of any Particular Church.

SECTION 4

The Congregation is not a governing body and should restrict its voting to issues directly related to choice of officers, maintenance of such officers, recall of such officers, or leaving a denomination (which also deals with which officers represent people). The control of the budget and all matters of ruling the church are under the authority of the session.

SECTION 5

While the Congregation is not a governing body, the Session may elect to call congregational meetings for the purpose of discussing and seeking opinions on the actions of the Session.

SECTION 6

The Moderator and the Clerk of the Session shall serve as Moderator and Clerk respectively in congregational meetings. In the event that it is impracticable or inexpedient for either or both of these to serve, the Session shall appoint others from among its number, or request an Elder of the Presbytery to serve.

SECTION 7

The Clerk shall keep a correct record of all the business transacted at the meeting and preserve it with the records of the Session. The minutes of the congregational meeting shall be approved by the congregation before the close of the meeting.

SECTION 8

Voting and floor privileges shall be restricted to male members of the congregation who are at least 20 years of age, who are in good and regular standing and who have, before the Session and other witnesses, answered the following questions in the affirmative:

1. Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired and inerrant Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ to be the perfect and only true way for a man to be saved? Do you?
2. Do you confess that because of your sinfulness, you abhor and humble yourself before God, and that you trust for salvation, not in yourself, but in the Lord Jesus Christ alone? Do you?
3. Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise, in reliance on the grace of God, to serve Him with all that is in you, to forsake the world, to mortify the deeds of the flesh, and to lead a godly life? Do you?
4. Will you be a faithful member of this congregation, share in its worship and ministry through your prayers and gifts as you are able, offer your study and service, and so fulfill your calling to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? Will you?
5. Will you devote yourself to the church's teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers? Will you?
6. Do you agree to submit in the Lord to the government of the Covenant Presbyterian Church and, in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or practice, to heed its discipline? Do you?

Male heads of households should weigh, according to maturity, the opinions of members of their households when voting or speaking on the floor.

SECTION 9

Voting by proxy shall not be permitted, nor shall anyone be allowed to vote except when the vote is being taken.

SECTION 10

Widows and other female heads of household should be encouraged to make known their wishes to the Session, which shall then designate one or more Elders to weigh their input in making their own congregational vote or speaking on the floor.

SECTION 11

A congregation may withdraw from the Covenant Presbyterian Church according to the following procedure:

- A) Before calling a congregational meeting for the purpose of taking any action contemplating withdrawal from the Covenant Presbyterian Church, the Session shall inform the Presbytery, ordinarily at a stated meeting, of its intention to call such a meeting, and shall provide grounds for its intention.
- B) The Presbytery, through representatives appointed for the purpose, shall seek, within a period not to exceed three weeks after the Presbytery meeting, in writing and in person, to attempt to dissuade the Session from its intention.
- C) If the Session is not dissuaded, it may issue a written call for the first meeting of the congregation. The call shall contain the Session's recommendation, with its written grounds, together with the Presbytery's written argument.
- D) If the congregation votes to withdraw, it shall be the duty of the Presbytery to prepare a roll of members who desire to continue as members of the Covenant Presbyterian Church and to provide for the oversight of these continuing members.

COMMENTARY:

Section 8: The Bible marks twenty years old as the age by which children are expected to complete their maturation. Males, for example, were accounted men in the census at age 20 (cf. Ex. 30:14) and expected to give a “ransom offering.” The redemption value of both males and females changed at 20 years of age (cf. Lev. 27:1-7) and males were expected to fight as members of Israel’s army at age 20 (cf. Num. 1:3).

CHAPTER 16
ADMISSION OF CHURCH MEMBERS

SECTION 1

A member may be received by a profession of faith. Those who are members of another congregation may be received by a letter of transfer or its equivalent. Those wishing to transfer from another church of like faith and practice which has been approved by the Session or regional Presbytery should still be examined by the Session. However, such members should still be examined by the Session. In all cases, the transfer will be affected when the members are publicly received in front of the congregation.

SECTION 2

Non-professing children of adult members are received into the membership of the Church upon receiving holy baptism. Non-professing, baptized children are to be received as members along with their parent(s) or guardian(s). Non-professing, unbaptized children must be brought forward to receive holy baptism in order to be accounted members of the Church along with their parent(s) or guardian(s).

SECTION 3

Before permitting any one to make profession of his faith or take membership vows in the presence of the congregation, the Session shall examine him in order to assure itself so far as possible that he possesses the doctrinal knowledge requisite for active faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, relies for salvation on the merits of Christ alone, and is determined by the grace of God to lead a Christian life.

SECTION 4

As a way of assisting those who contemplate becoming members of the Church by making public profession of faith in Christ, the Session may conduct classes in Christian doctrine to help them understand the implication of this significant act and perform it intelligently and sincerely.

SECTION 5

The Session shall examine the candidate for membership to ascertain if he:

- A) possesses the knowledge requisite for an active faith and obedient walk in the Lord Jesus Christ;
- B) relies for salvation on the merits of Christ alone;
- C) confesses a hearty trust in Christ for the forgiveness of his sins;
- D) places his hope of everlasting righteousness and salvation in God's grace; and
- E) is resolved to live a Christian life by the grace of God.

SECTION 6

The weakest measure of faith is to be accepted in those who desire to be admitted into the Church. Weak Christians, if sincere, have the substance of that faith, repentance and holiness which is required in Church members and such have most need of the ordinances for their confirmation and growth in the faith.

SECTION 7

When the Session is satisfied that an individual is qualified to make public profession of faith in Christ, his name shall be publicly announced to the congregation at least one week before the day chosen for this solemn event, in order that the members may have opportunity to acquaint the Session with such facts concerning him as may appear to be irreconcilable with a sincere profession. The Session shall weigh such evidence and determine its validity.

SECTION 8

The Session shall acquire jurisdiction after they have voted to receive the new member.

SECTION 9

A member involved in a trial or under discipline may transfer to another Particular Church within the CPC. The Session shall acquire jurisdiction after they have voted to receive him into membership and the congregation has been apprised by public announcement. The member's status must transfer without any changes in the censure or abrogation of rights and privileges if not under censure. No rights or privileges shall be abrogated until 1) any pending appellate process has been exhausted by the broadest CPC court to which a complaint can be made, or 2) new proceedings have been initiated and completed.

SECTION 10

All the rights and privileges of membership belong to covenant members. Such rights and privileges shall not be qualified by the filing of any complaint, until the complaint is sustained by the broadest CPC court to which a complaint can be made.

CHAPTER 17
DIVESTING FROM OFFICE

SECTION 1

An officer may be divested of his office, or deposed, by judicial discipline for an offense in doctrine or life. Such divestiture, or deposition, shall be in accordance with the provisions of the Book of Discipline.

SECTION 2

An officer may also be divested of his office without censure, for reasons other than delinquency in faith or life. A Presbytery shall consider divesting an Elder of his office without censure if:

- A) He no longer desires to actively serve for health issues or other reasons of a temporary nature; or
- B) Whether through lack of gifts or failure to cultivate them, he is no longer edifying to the congregation and the Session makes such recommendation or
- C) Permanent physical or mental disability prevents him from exercising the office.

SECTION 3

If a Presbytery contemplates divesting a minister without censure, the Elder in question shall be duly informed and given the opportunity at a meeting of the Presbytery to defend his continuance in office or to demit the ministry.

SECTION 4

A motion to divest shall require a two-thirds majority of those voting unless it is acting upon recommendation of the Session in which case a simple majority is sufficient. When an Elder is divested of his office or demits the ministry, the Presbytery shall remove his name from its roll and dismiss him to a local church.

SECTION 5

An Elder or Deacon may be divested of his office if his services do not appear to be edifying to the congregation. In such a case the following procedure shall be followed:

- A) The process of divestiture may be originated by the Session or by a petition to the Session signed by one-fourth of the professing members in good and regular standing.
- B) The officer in question shall be given the opportunity at a meeting of the Session to defend his continuance in office or to demit the office.
- C) If the question is to be presented to the congregation it shall be at a regularly called meeting.
- D) The call for the meeting shall stipulate that this matter is to be considered at the meeting, and the officer shall be notified at the same time.

- E) The congregation, by a two-thirds majority of those voting, may require the Session to petition Presbytery for permission to remove him from office.

SECTION 6

A Deacon who desires to resign from or refuses to serve in the office shall be counseled by the Session concerning his decision. Similarly, An Elder who desires to resign from or refuses to serve in the office shall be counseled by the Presbytery concerning his decision. If, after such counseling, he persists in his decision, he shall be allowed to demit his office, and the Session shall record the fact in its minutes.

SECTION 7

A man who has been divested of office and who is subsequently elected to that office shall be viewed as receiving initial election to that office and shall be reexamined and reordained.

SECTION 8

Nothing in this Chapter shall be held to imply that when an officer retires, or is retired, because of advanced age or disability, from his official position, he shall be divested of his office or prevented from performing the functions of that office from time to time. While such an officer shall not have a vote in any Presbytery meeting, he may attend as a corresponding member.

CHAPTER 18
EXAMINATION OF CANDIDATES FOR ORDINATION

SECTION 1

Presbyteries should develop standard examination procedures for ordination exams. The following areas shall be included:

- A) Sermon Examination (on specific text)
- B) Doctrine and Creeds
- C) Church History
- D) Church Polity
- E) Ethics
- F) Pastoral Theology & Practice
- G) View & Knowledge of Scripture
- H) Personal Faith & Life

SECTION 2

Sermon examination shall normally consist of a written sermon delivered to the examiner and the sermon delivered orally to the Presbytery.

SECTION 3

After the floor examination, Presbytery shall go into closed Session for discussion and confirmation of the examination.

SECTION 4

Presbytery may recess at any time(s) during an examination, but at the conclusion shall go into closed Session to discuss the examination and determine if the candidate has sustained the examination.

SECTION 5

There shall be a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote in favor of the candidate for his total examination to be sustained.

SECTION 6

Upon sustaining the examination, the candidate shall be informed and prayer of thanks given. If the candidate has not sustained the examination, he shall be notified how he may rectify the areas of concern and shall also be notified that he, through his Session, may request a further exam.

COMMENTARY:

Section 1: It is understood that the examination is to be both theological and pastoral. The exam is not meant to be exhaustive in any area. It is meant to give the Candidate an opportunity to show his wisdom and ability in applying the Scriptures pastorally in the

various areas (as compared to merely knowing academic details). As such the Examination may also expose areas of “weakness,” where a candidate may need to improve or further develop his understanding, proficiency, or orthodoxy. It is also understood that the examination is to be especially geared toward discerning the Biblical orthodoxy of a Candidate. (i.e. that what he knows is in keeping with Biblical and confessional truth).

CHAPTER 19
ORGANIZING AND RECEIVING CONGREGATIONS

SECTION 1

A group of believers may be organized through the efforts of one or more CPC congregations. Once organized, this group will be known as a Mission Church. Upon attaining status as a particular church, it shall be its own authority and no longer under the jurisdiction of any other CPC church or churches.

SECTION 2

Mission Churches may be organized by a sponsoring CPC Church or by a commission established by Presbytery which shall function as the Session.

SECTION 3

The sponsoring CPC church session or the commission shall function as the acting Session until such time as the Mission Church is particularized.

SECTION 4

A membership roll will be maintained by the sponsoring Session separate from the rolls of any other congregation.

SECTION 5

In particularizing a congregation from a Mission Church the acting Session shall do the following:

- A) Supervise the creation of a new constitution which accepts and reflects all the standards of the CPC.
- B) Supervise the training, examination, and ordination of officers in accordance with the Form of Church Government.
- C) Draw up a list of members which shall become the charter roll of the new congregation.
- D) Present a petition to the regional Presbytery to organize them.
- E) Call a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing officers; such a meeting shall be held apart from the attendance of the members of the sponsoring Particular Church. Charter roll members may vote in all matters placed before them by their acting Session.
- F) Handle the installation of new officers and the transfer of the Mission Church to their care.

SECTION 6

A congregation, meeting the minimum requirements of a church (Chapter 10, Section 2) but not a mission work of the CPC, may be received under the authority of the regional Presbytery with the sponsorship of at least one Particular Church of the CPC. The

sponsoring Session shall examine the petitioning Session with respect to their subscription to the standards of the CPC. The sponsoring Session may bring a motion to the broader Presbytery to receive the sponsored congregation into the Presbytery. The sponsored church shall be known as a Candidate Church.

SECTION 7

The sponsoring CPC session shall guarantee to the presbytery and the credentials committee that the Candidate Church meets the requirements of a particular CPC church and that all the requirements normally needed for calling to office of any other officer in the CPC shall be met in all the officers of any congregation received.

SECTION 8

Normally, the sponsoring session will be the closest Church geographically to the Candidate Church. If there is any question of which Session shall preside, then the broader assembly in existence shall determine the issue.

SECTION 9

A Candidate Church shall be considered an independent body and will be allowed to continue with all her normal and expected practices in life and worship, but shall be under the care of a sponsoring Particular Church until such time as the elders of the Candidate Church are received into the Presbytery and the Candidate Church is received as a Particular CPC Church. A Candidate Church can maintain such status for a maximum of twelve months.

CHAPTER 20
FRATERNAL RELATIONS

SECTION 1

The Covenant Presbyterian Church hereby defines fraternal relations according to these guidelines. Unless otherwise specified or determined, fraternal relations with another ecclesiastical body entails the following:

- A) Occasional pulpit exchange.
- B) Intercommunion.
- C) Consultation on matters of mutual interest.
- D) Respect for each other's church discipline.
- E) A comity arrangement by which each denomination pledges to consult with the other denomination before engaging in new mission works in an area where the other denomination has an existing congregation or mission work.
- F) A frank exchange of each other's distinctive views, with the recognition of the reality of the unity of the visible Church.
- G) A goal of being able to present a united witness to a watching world.
- H) Letters of greetings.
- I) Apprising each other of the various actions undertaken, by means of sharing of minutes of meetings.
- J) The exchange of fraternal delegates as opportunity presents itself.

SECTION 2

Only the General Assembly may establish fraternal relations with another National Church Body.

CHAPTER 21
THE GOVERNING DOCUMENTS AND THEIR AMENDMENT

SECTION 1

The Constitution, including the incorporated Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and the forms of subscription required of Elders, and Deacons, as these forms are found in the Form of Church Government, may be amended only in the following manner:

- A) The General Assembly shall determine whether a suggested change is worthy of consideration;
- B) If so determined, it shall appoint a committee to consider any suggested change and to report to the next regular Assembly with recommendations;
- C) that assembly may then propose the amendment to the Presbyteries by a two-thirds majority of the members voting;
- D) approval by a Presbytery shall be by a majority of the members voting;
- E) following the decision the Clerk of Presbytery shall notify the Clerk of the Assembly, in writing, of the decision of the Presbytery;
- F) if two-thirds of the Presbyteries approve the amendment it shall be adopted finally only after approval of the next ensuing Assembly by a two-thirds vote of the members voting.

SECTION 2

The Form of Church Government, Book of Discipline, and Directory for the Public Worship of God are subordinate to the Constitution. These three documents shall be published together, and the combined document shall be entitled the Book of Church Order of the Covenant Presbyterian Church.

SECTION 3

With the exception noted in Section 1, above, the Form of Church Government, Book of Discipline, and Directory for the Public Worship of God may be amended only in the following manner:

- A) The General Assembly after due discussion shall propose the amendment to the Presbyteries;
- B) each Presbytery shall vote on the question before the next regular Assembly;
- C) the Clerk of each Presbytery shall notify the Clerk of the Assembly, in writing, of the action of the Presbytery;
- D) if a majority of the Presbyteries has thus signified approval of the amendment, the amendment shall become effective on January 1 of the following the year in which the Clerk announces to the Assembly that a majority of the Presbyteries has approved the amendment;

- E) If the Assembly proposing the amendment desires it to become effective earlier than the date herein provided, it may set an earlier date, but not sooner than the next regular Assembly, by a two-thirds vote;
- F) No amendments shall be proposed to the Presbyteries without written grounds for the proposed amendments.

SECTION 4

Appendices are not considered part of the Book of Church Order and may be modified by a majority vote of the General Assembly.

SECTION 5

Organic union of the Covenant Presbyterian Church with another Church shall follow the same procedure as in Section 1, above, for amending the Constitution.

CHAPTER 22
ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

SECTION 1

Standardization of Minutes for broader Presbyteries.

- A) All references to persons in the minutes must be standardized, as far as possible, to include their office, first name or initial, and last name. Any non-delegates of the CPC referred to in the minutes will be designated as such with appropriate titles. Church officers are to be listed as Elder and Deacon.
- B) Minutes should include motions and decisions that are made on them, but not the details of the discussion unless called for.
- C) Movers and seconders of motions made during the process of a meeting shall not be listed in the minutes unless they come as part of advanced submitted overture.
- D) Devotionals shall include the Scripture used.
- E) Songs and Psalms sung shall be listed by titles.
- F) Documents may be attached.

SECTION 2

All official records of the broader Presbytery meetings are to be held in the care of a member designated for that purpose. When that person ceases to be a member or no longer desires to perform the service, another Elder shall be designated. Draft copies and other collateral materials may be kept and used by individual attendees but are not the official record of the Presbyteries.

SECTION 3

The records of a closed Session are to be made available to Presbyters of that Presbytery only and shall be kept confidential. Closed Session records of a Session are under the authority of that Session. Only the Presbytery and their fellow Elders shall be privy to such records (not Deacons) with the following restrictions:

- A) They are not to be published (refers to making any items known to any non-CPC Presbyter) in whole or in part in any form without prior approval of the Presbytery that holds the closed records.
- B) During the closed Session, a determination as to what shall be recorded shall be made.
- C) Re-opening closed Session issues shall require a closed Session to be heard.
- D) The Session alone through its Clerk may make requests to closed records of broader Presbyteries.

SECTION 4

All position papers approved by the broader Presbytery will be filed in Appendix A in a section titled “Position Papers” alphabetized and indexed appropriately.

SECTION 5

The Authorized Version of the Bible will be used by the Presbytery for public statements, unless the Presbytery specifies otherwise by majority vote in each case. We do not accept as reasonable, any exclusive understanding of the Authorized or King James Bible as the only English version authorized by God for use in His Churches (much less “inspired” or “inerrant”), though it is both acceptable and edifying for churches and brethren to use the Authorized Version as their church Bible or for personal use.

APPENDIX A
CHECKLIST FOR CHURCH OFFICERS

The following Checklist for Church Officers shall be set forth as a highly useful tool for all CPC churches at the discretion of the Session in evaluating and examining candidates for office. For more complete guidelines and specific requirements, see the Elder Nomination Guidelines and Elder Nomination Form documents available from either the Credentials Committee or Stated Clerk.

- A) Testimony of Candidate's life history and conversion to Christianity.
- B) History of Candidate's church and denominational affiliations noting the approximate length of tenure, ministry participation, offices held, circumstances and reasons for leaving, and any pending or past disciplinary action by an ecclesiastical body.
- C) Listing of Candidate's formal education, including knowledge of the original languages.
- D) An interview with Candidate's wife, if applicable, concerning her conversion to Christianity, her testimony of support to her husband's ministry, and her assessment of her husband's qualifications.
- E) Disclosure of any significant past sin of a public nature (or one that has the potential to become public) and/or sinful habits.
- F) Disclosure of any pending, anticipated or actual civil or criminal actions involving the Candidate or any organizations within which he has a responsible part.
- G) Assessment of Candidate's strengths and weaknesses for ministry leadership as measured by 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, and general observation.
- H) In the case of a Candidate who has been divorced, a full explanation of the causes of the divorce should be submitted in writing along with proof.
- I) Disclosure of any debt (not secured by tangible collateral) beyond the equivalent of three month's income so that Presbytery may determine its possible effect upon Candidate's ministry.
- J) Disclosure of the nature of Candidate's baptism.
- K) Disclosure and renunciation by the Candidate of any membership in a secret society such as Freemasonry.
- L) A written statement regarding Candidate's areas of concern, disagreement, or questions regarding the Westminster Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms and the Constitution and Book of Church Government of the CPC. Every Candidate for office should take special note regarding the limitations that are placed upon him regarding any exceptions/scruples he has that are not already allowed by the Constitution and be prepared to abide by the provisions of Form of Church Government.
- M) Does the Candidate agree that all questions or disputes with the Constitution and Standards of the CPC are to be resolved at Presbytery and the broader assemblies

and that he will not preach or teach any questionable or disputed doctrines and practices?

- N) Does the Candidate agree not to turn to the world to resolve differences between the Church and its members?
- O) Is the Candidate willing to take the vows applicable to his office according to the CPC Book of Church Order?

APPENDIX B
THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ELDER

Upon nomination, Candidates are to submit written answers to the following questions at least six months prior to the date in which they seek ordination. The Credentials Committee will interact with the candidate and sponsoring Session regarding answers that may need revision. Successful passing of the written examination will be required before scheduling an oral examination. Oral examinations can and will address topics that go beyond those covered in the written examination, but will remain within the broad scope of scriptural knowledge, theology, church history, polity, and our confessional standards.

Candidates are allowed to study with others, but ultimately must submit answers in their own words and may not consult previously submitted examinations. All quotations and summaries of outside sources must be cited. The Credentials Committee, may, with prior notice, add to or change these questions at any time. Answers need not be voluminous, but must be sufficient to provide a basis for thoughtful examination.

Doctrine and Creeds:

- 1) Do you have any exception(s) or scruple(s) with the Westminster Standards other than those listed in the CPC Constitution? If so, please give a written statement (2-3 sentences) of the exception(s) or scruple(s) and the Biblical and historical foundation you believe for such.
- 2) How do you plan to use the Westminster Confession in your ministry?
- 3) Do you heartily embrace the theological system known as the Reformed faith? Are there any parts of it or emphases in it with which you disagree? If so, please elaborate.
- 4) If you are coming to the Presbytery from outside the CPC, what are the significant differences of your denomination's views from the CPC? Why have you decided to labor in the CPC instead of your current denomination?
- 5) What is your view of the length of the days of creation?
- 6) Is there any "myth" in Scripture? (Explain your answer).
- 7) What is your view on the gifts of the Spirit? Would you consider yourself a "cessationist?"
- 8) Is there any continuing revelation today?
- 9) What is your view on tongues? (Explain and briefly defend).
- 10) Briefly explain your understanding of the Trinity.
- 11) Briefly explain your view of the person and work of Christ.

- 12) What are your views regarding the current terminology of “Covenant of Redemption,” “Covenant of Works” and “Covenant of Grace?” Do you have any scruples regarding that terminology?
- 13) What is your opinion of the views of E.P. Sanders, James Dunn and N.T. Wright (the “New Perspective on Paul”) regarding the Pauline doctrine of justification?
- 14) What is your opinion on the views of Auburn Avenue regarding the objectivity of the Covenant?
- 15) Explain your view of the relationship between faith and works.
- 16) Is Dispensationalism Biblical? Why or why not?
- 17) Do you consider yourself a Calvinist? Do you adhere to all “5 points?” Why or why not?
- 18) Do you believe that Christians are obligated to obey the moral law, and that the moral law is the abiding standard of righteousness even under the new covenant?
- 19) What is your view of the “carnal Christian” doctrine and the Lordship controversy? What about “Higher life” or “Victorious Christian life” teaching?
- 20) Do you embrace the view of God’s law known as “theonomy”? If so, define your view briefly. Are you a Christian Reconstructionist?
- 21) What is your view of the use of alcohol and tobacco?
- 22) What is your view on the propriety or impropriety of civil disobedience?
- 23) What is your view on worship? Specifically, do you embrace the historic view of the regulative principle of worship? What about more recent thoughts on “covenant renewal worship?” (Include what you do and allow).
- 24) What role does the Law play in the New Testament era?
- 25) Should Christians still observe a Sabbath day? And if so, what is your view of the Lord’s Day? How would you teach this principle to others?
- 26) What are your views on divorce and remarriage? (Include your grounds for divorce & grounds for remarriage).
- 27) What is your view of preaching?
- 28) What is your view on evangelism? (Briefly explain what you view as proper and improper evangelism).
- 29) What is your eschatological position?

- 30) What are your views on Heaven and Hell?
- 31) Define 'sacrament' and 'means of grace'.
- 32) What happens at a Sacrament?
- 33) How do Old Testament and New Testament sacraments differ and how are they connected?
- 34) Why is foot washing or marriage or tithing not a sacrament?
- 35) How are sacraments made efficacious?
- 36) How are sacraments to be rightly administered?
- 37) Why should the children of believers be baptized?
- 38) How will you respond to those who wish to join the church but do not want to have their children baptized?
- 39) Explain this statement from the WCF. "The efficacy of Baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time."
- 40) Does the mode of baptism matter? What will be your practice as to the mode?
- 41) What is a valid baptism and would you re-baptize if requested?
- 42) When may a child take communion? What if anything is necessary?
- 43) What of a 20 year old covenant child that has not been admitted to the table, what should be done?
- 44) How is grace received by the communicant?
- 45) What are Biblical elements of worship?
- 46) How do you "fence the table" in communion?
- 47) What are the different Reformed views regarding Christ's presence in the elements.
- 48) What is the relationship between:
 - a) regeneration and baptism?

- b) faith and baptism?
 - c) sanctification and baptism?
 - d) sanctification and communion?
 - e) justification and baptism?
- 49) When and by whom may the sacraments be administered?
- 50) What is your view on the Covenant Community? What are the roles of men, women, and children both in the home and church?

Church History:

- 1) Give a brief overview of the major epochs (divisions) of church history.
- 2) Trace the development & continuity of reformed theology in church history.
- 3) Explain the formation of the canon.
- 4) Who were some of the early church fathers – tell about their significance?
- 5) Who was Constantine and what was his significance?
- 6) What was the significance of the Council of Nicea?
- 7) What was the significance of the Council of Chalcedon?
- 8) What was the Arian controversy?
- 9) What was Gnosticism? -does it have any significance today?
- 10) Who was Augustine -what was his relationship to Pelagius?
- 11) Briefly tell who Bernard of Clairvaux, Gregory the Great, Francis of Assisi, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas were.
- 12) Explain the split between the eastern and western churches in 11th cent.
- 13) Discuss the medieval Roman Catholic sacramental system.
- 14) Who were some of the key people and events leading up to the Reformation?
- 15) What was the significance of John Hus?
- 16) What are the “solas”

- 17) Who were John Knox, John Calvin, Martin Luther, and Ulrich Zwingli?
- 18) Who were the Covenanters and what is their significance to Presbyterianism today?
- 19) What was the Scottish reformation?
- 20) What was the Synod of Dordt?
- 21) What was the historical context of the writing of the WCF (name some of the key people and dates involved)?
- 22) Who were the Puritans – what is their significance?
- 23) What was the Marrow Controversy?
- 24) What was the 1st Great Awakening (key dates, people, and significance for today)?
- 25) Who was Jonathan Edwards – what was his contribution to reformed theology?
- 26) How was the 2nd Great Awakening different from the 1st (key dates, people, and issues)?
- 27) Who was Charles Finney – what was/is his significance?
- 28) Trace the development of Presbyterianism in America from 18th century.
- 29) What effect did the Civil War have on American Presbyterianism?
- 30) What was the old school/new school division?
- 31) What is fundamentalism?
- 32) Who were Charles Hodge, James Henly Thornwell, William Carey, J. Gresham Machen, Cornelius Van Til?
- 33) Explain the development of neo-orthodoxy & highlight major people involved.
- 34) What difference does church history make in your preaching/teaching?
- 35) Why was the CPC begun?
- 36) What are the distinctives of the CPC?
- 37) Briefly outline the history of and the theological distinctives of the following Presbyterian bodies: PCUSA, OPC, PCA, RPCNA, and ARP.

Church Polity:

- 1) Have you read the Constitution and Book of Church Order of the CPC? Do you have any exceptions or reservations?
- 2) What is Presbyterianism?
- 3) What is the role of the Presbytery and General Assembly with regard to the local church?
- 4) What are the marks of a true church and why are they important to maintain?
- 5) What is the difference between the visible and invisible church?
- 6) What is required for church membership?
- 7) What is the role of the Elder and Deacon in the local church?
- 8) What are the qualifications for Elder and Deacon and where are they found in Scripture?
- 9) What is the role of women with regard to leadership in the church?
- 10) How would you, as an Elder, distinguish between different levels of church discipline (i.e. censure, rebuke, excommunication)?
- 11) What is the purpose of church discipline?
- 12) What are the courts of the church - what is their jurisdiction?
- 13) What are the steps of church discipline?
- 14) How do you restore a fallen repentant brother/sister in the Lord?

View & Knowledge of Scripture:

- 1) What do the Scriptures teach about the authorship of the Bible? Support your answer with biblical texts.
- 2) To what extent is the Bible inerrant and infallible?
- 3) What do the Old Testament and New Testament both teach about the purpose and use of the Bible?
- 4) Give a very general outline of Old Testament history, including key dates.
- 5) What is the relationship between Gen. 3:15 and rest of Scripture?
- 6) Who were the three patriarchs and what was their relation to one another?
- 7) Where do we find the various covenants in the Old Testament?

- 8) Identify Lot, Ishmael, Moab and Ammon and describe the relation of each to Israel.
- 9) Identify 5 judges of Israel during the period of the Judges. What lessons do we learn from their lives?
- 10) Who were some of the good kings of Israel and what were some of things they did?
- 11) Who were some of the evil kings of Israel and what were some of things they did?
- 12) What are the various types of Psalms? Should we use all varieties in our worship today?
- 13) How did the style, nature, and content of prophetic utterance differ between the pre- and post-exilic prophets? How were they similar?
- 14) Pick one of the Major Prophets and describe his book and ministry.
- 15) Who was Josiah and what significant event happened in relation to him?
- 16) Identify Sennacharib, Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus.
- 17) What are some key events that took place in the intertestamental period?
- 18) List several examples of Old Testament types.
- 19) List several examples of Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament.
- 20) What are the distinctive features of each of the four gospels? Include in your answer a brief discussion of the “synoptic” gospels.
- 21) How and why were the twelve disciples chosen?
- 22) Who were the Pharisees and Sadducees? How and when did they come into power?
- 23) Why did Jesus speak in parables?
- 24) Identify Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, Zaccheus, and Lazarus and describe their part in Jesus’ ministry.
- 25) Discuss the relationship between Luke and Acts, providing an outline of the book of Acts.
- 26) Who were Matthias, Stephen, Cornelius, and Barnabas?
- 27) What qualified Paul to be an apostle?
- 28) Describe Paul’s missionary journeys.
- 29) Outline the book of Romans.

- 30) What abuses in the Corinthian church did Paul address in his first letter to them?
- 31) Compare the old and new covenants as described in the book of Hebrews.
- 32) What are the “catholic” or “general” epistles? Discuss their teaching in relation to the Pauline epistles.
- 33) How should the book of Revelation be used in pastoral ministry?

APPENDIX C
RESOURCES FOR THE ELDER NOMINEE

The following recommendations are advisory only and regard educational resources for training laymen in the Scriptures. These resources will prepare candidates for the theological examination by Presbytery in lieu of or in addition to a specific M.Div. or M.A. program. As the Credentials Committee learns of additional resources they will be added to this list. Updated lists can be requested at any time.

A) Doctrine and Creeds

a. General Systematic Theology and Trinitarianism:

i. Primary Books:

- Berkhof, Louis, Systematic Theology
- Calvin, John, Institutes of the Christian Religion
- Reymond, Robert, A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion

ii. Secondary Books:

- Boice, James, Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace
- Frame, John, The Doctrine of God
- Frame, John, The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God
- Hagopian, David (ed.), Back to the Basics
- MacLeod, Donald, The Spirit of Promise

iii. Taped Courses/Seminars:

- Reformed Theological Seminary's (RTS) lecture series Systematic Theology I
- Sproul, R.C., Basic Theology, package

b. Bibliology and Hermeneutics:

i. Primary Books:

- Geisler, Norman (ed.), Inerrancy
- Mathison, Keith, Sola Scriptura
- Pratt, Richard, He Gave Us Stories

ii. Secondary Books:

- Adams, Jay, *Shepherding God's Flock*
- Baxter, Richard, *The Reformed Pastor*
- Clark, Gordon, *God's Hammer: The Bible and Its Critics*
- Clark, Gordon, *Language and Theology*
- Pickering, Wilbur *The Identity of the New Testament Text II*

iii. Taped Courses/Seminars:

- RTS lecture series *Genesis-Joshua, Judges-Poets, Isaiah-Malachi, Gospels and Acts, Pauline Epistles, Hebrews-Revelation*
- Sproul, R.C., *Hath God Said*

c. Ecclesiology and the Sacraments:

i. Primary Books:

- Berkouwer, G.C., *The Sacraments*
- Booth, Robert, *Children of the Promise*
- Gallant, Tim, *Feed My Lambs*
- Mathison, Keith, *Given for You*
- Robertson, O. Palmer, *Christ of the Covenants*
- Strauch, Alexander, *Biblical Eldership*
- Strauch, Alexander, *The New Testament Deacon*

ii. Secondary Books:

- Baxter, Richard, *The Reformed Pastor*
- Adams, Jay, *Shepherding God's Flock*

iii. Taped Courses/Seminars:

- RTS lecture series *Systematic Theology II*

d. Eschatology:

i. Primary Books:

- Mathison, Keith, *Dispensationalism*
- Mathison, Keith, *Postmillennialism*
- Riddlebarger, Kim, *Amillennialism*

ii. Secondary Books:

- Gentry, Kenneth, Before Jerusalem Fell
- Gentry, Kenneth, He Shall Have Dominion
- Mathison, Keith, When Shall These Things Be?
- Sproul, R.C., The Last Days According to Jesus
- Gregg, Steve, Revelation, Four Parallel Views

iii. Taped Courses/Seminars:

- Sproul, R.C., Dust to Glory
- Sproul, R.C., The Last Days According to Jesus

e. Soteriology:

i. Primary Books:

- Beisner, E. Calvin (ed.), The Auburn Avenue Theology: Pros and Cons
- Boice, James, The Doctrines of Grace
- Boettner, Lorraine, The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination
- Hoekema, Anthony, Saved by Grace
- Murray, John, Redemption Accomplished and Applied

ii. Secondary Books:

- Piper, John, The Pleasures of God
- Piper, John, Desiring God
- Pratt, Richard, Designed for Dignity
- Sproul, R.C., Chosen by God

iii. Taped Courses/Seminars:

- RTS taped lecture series Systematic Theology II
- Sproul, R.C., Predestination in Six Easy Lessons

f. Westminster Confession of Faith:

i. Primary Books:

- Hodge, A.A., The Confession of Faith

- Vos, Johannes, The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary

ii. Secondary Books:

- Barker, William, Puritan Profiles
- Duncan, Ligon (ed.), The Westminster Confession into the 21st Century vol 1&2
- Hetherington, William, History of the Westminster Assembly of Divines

B) Church History

a. Primary Books:

- Berkhof, Louis, History of Christian Doctrine
- Kuiper, B.K., The Church in History
- Lattourette, Kenneth, History of the Christian Church vol. 1&2

b. Secondary Books:

- Lightfoot, J.B., The Apostolic Fathers

c. Taped Courses/Seminars:

- Reformed Theological Seminary's (RTS) lecture series History of Christianity I&II, Church and World in the 20th Century
- Sproul, R.C., History of Christian Thought

C) Church Polity and Presbyterianism

a. Primary Books:

- Witherow, Thomas, The Apostolic Church
- Longfield, Bradley, The Presbyterian Controversy

b. Secondary Books:

- Cannada, Robert, The Historic Polity of the PCA
- Hall, David, The Divine Right of Church Government
- McCrie, Thomas, The Story of the Scottish Church

D) Ethics and Culture

a. Primary Books:

- Clark, Gordon, Ethics and Politics
- Murray, John, Principles of Conduct

b. Secondary Books:

- Brown, Harold O.J., The Sensate Culture
- Myers, Ken, All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes
- Postman, Neil, Amusing Ourselves to Death

c. Taped Courses/Seminars:

- RTS lecture series Church and World in the 20th Century.
Pastoral and Social Ethics
- Sproul, R.C., Christian Ethics

This page intentionally left blank

Covenant Presbyterian Church

Book of Discipline

First Edition

Adopted *pro tem* on an advisory basis without constitutional authority
from Part II, Rules of Discipline of the Book of Church Order
of the Presbyterian Church in America
May 18, 2007

This page intentionally left blank.

PART II

THE RULES OF DISCIPLINE

CHAPTER 27

Discipline -- Its Nature, Subjects and Ends

27-1. Discipline is the exercise of authority given the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide its members and to promote its purity and welfare.

The term has two senses:

- a. the one referring to the whole government, inspection, training, guardianship and control which the church maintains over its members, its officers and its courts;
- b. the other a restricted and technical sense, signifying judicial process.

27-2. All baptized persons, being members of the Church are subject to its discipline and entitled to the benefits thereof.

27-3. The exercise of discipline is highly important and necessary. In its proper usage discipline maintains:

- a. the glory of God,
- b. the purity of His Church,
- c. the keeping and reclaiming of disobedient sinners. Discipline is for the purpose of godliness (1 Timothy 4:7); therefore, it demands a self-examination under Scripture.

Its ends, so far as it involves judicial action, are the rebuke of offenses, the removal of scandal, the vindication of the honor of Christ, the promotion of the purity and general edification of the Church, and the spiritual good of offenders themselves.

27-4. The power which Christ has given the Church is for building up, and not for destruction. It is to be exercised as under a dispensation of mercy and not of wrath. As in the preaching of the Word the wicked are doctrinally separated from the good, so by discipline the Church authoritatively separates between the holy and the profane. In this it acts the part of a tender mother, correcting her children for their good, that every one of them may be presented faultless in the day of the Lord Jesus. Discipline is systematic training under the authority of God's Scripture. No communing or non-communing member of the Church should be allowed to stray from the Scripture's discipline. Therefore, teaching elders must:

- a. instruct the officers in discipline,
- b. instruct the congregation in discipline,
- c. jointly practice it in the context of the congregation and church courts.

27-5. Scriptural law is the basis of all discipline because it is the revelation of God's Holy will.

Proper disciplinary principles are set forth in the Scriptures and must be followed. They are:

- a. Instruction in the Word;
- b. Individual's responsibility to admonish one another (Matthew 18:15, Galatians 6:1);
- c. If the admonition is rejected, then the calling of one or more witnesses (Matthew 18:16);
- d. If rejection persists, then the Church must act through her court unto admonition, suspension, excommunication and deposition (See *BCO* 29 and 30 for further explanation).

Steps (a) through (d) must be followed in proper order for the exercise of discipline.

CHAPTER 28

Disciplining of Noncommuning Members.

28-1. The spiritual nurture, instruction and training of the children of the Church are committed by God primarily to their parents. They are responsible to the Church for the faithful discharge of their obligations. It is a principal duty of the Church to promote true religion in the home. True discipleship involves learning the Word of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit both at home and in the Church. Without learning there is no growth and without growth there is no discipline and without discipline there is sin and iniquity (1 Timothy 4:7).

28-2. The home and the Church should also make special provision for instructing the children in the Bible and in the church Catechisms. To this end Sessions should establish and conduct under their authority Sunday schools and Bible classes, and adopt such other methods as may be found helpful. The Session shall encourage the parents of the Church to guide their children in the catechizing and disciplining of them in the Christian religion.

28-3. The Church should maintain constant and sympathetic relations with the children. It also should encourage them, on coming to years of discretion, to make confession of the Lord Jesus Christ and to enter upon all privileges of full church membership. If they are wayward they should be cherished by the church and every means used to reclaim them.

28-4. Adult non-communing members, who receive with meekness and appreciation the oversight and instruction of the Church, are entitled to special attention. Their rights and privileges under the covenant should be frequently and fully explained, and they should be warned of the sin and danger of neglecting their covenant obligations.

28-5. All non-communing members shall be deemed under the care of the church to which their parents belong, if they live under the parental roof and are minors; otherwise, under that of the church where they reside, or with which they ordinarily worship.

CHAPTER 29

Offenses

29-1. An offense, the proper object of judicial process, is anything in the doctrines or practice of a Church member professing faith in Christ which is contrary to the Word of God. The *Confession of Faith* and the *Larger* and *Shorter Catechisms* of the Westminster Assembly, together with the formularies of government, discipline, and worship are accepted by the

Covenant Presbyterian Church as standard expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to both faith and practice. Nothing, therefore, ought to be considered by any court as an offense, or admitted as a matter of accusation, which cannot be proved to be such from Scripture.

29-2. Offenses are either personal or general, private or public; but all of them being sins against God, are therefore grounds of discipline.

29-3. Personal offenses are violations of the divine law, considered in the special relation of wrongs or injuries to particular individuals. General offenses are heresies or immoralities having no such relation, or considered apart from it.

29-4. Private offenses are those which are known only to a few persons. Public offenses are those which are notorious.

CHAPTER 30

Church Censures

30-1. The censures, which may be inflicted by church courts, are admonition, suspension from the Sacraments, excommunication, suspension from office, and deposition from office. The censures of admonition or definite suspension from office shall be administered to an accused who, upon conviction, satisfies the court as to his repentance and makes such restitution as is appropriate. Such censure concludes the judicial process. The censures of indefinite suspension or excommunication shall be administered to an accused who, upon conviction, remains impenitent.

30-2. Admonition is the formal reproof of an offender by a church court, warning him of his guilt and danger, and exhorting him to be more circumspect and watchful in the future.

30-3. Suspension from Sacraments is the temporary exclusion from those ordinances, and is indefinite as to its duration. There is no definite suspension from the Sacraments.

Suspension from office is the exclusion of a church officer from his office. This may be definite or indefinite as to its duration. With respect to church officers, suspension from Sacraments shall always be accompanied by suspension from office. But suspension from office is not always necessarily accompanied with suspension from Sacraments.

Definite suspension from office is administered when the credit of religion, the honor of Christ, and the good of the delinquent demand it, even though the delinquent has given satisfaction to the court.

Indefinite suspension is administered to the impenitent offender until he exhibits signs of repentance, or until by his conduct, the necessity of the greatest censure be made manifest. In the case of indefinite suspension from office imposed due to scandalous conduct, the procedure outlined in *BCO* 34-8 shall be followed.

30-4. Excommunication is the excision of an offender from the communion of the Church. This censure is to be inflicted only on account of gross crime or heresy and when the offender shows himself incorrigible and contumacious. The design of this censure is to operate on the offender as a means of reclaiming him, to deliver the church from the scandal of his offense, and to inspire all with fear by the example of his discipline.

30-5. Deposition is the degradation of an officer from his office, and may or may not be accompanied with the infliction of other censure.

CHAPTER 31

The Parties in Cases of Process

31-1. Original jurisdiction (the right first or initially to hear and determine) in relation to ministers of the Gospel shall be in the Presbytery of which the minister is a member, except in cases as provided in *BCO* 34-1. Such original jurisdiction in relation to church members shall be in the Session of the church of which he/she is a member, except in cases as provided in *BCO* 33-1.

31-2. It is the duty of all church Sessions and Presbyteries to exercise care over those subject to their authority. They shall with due diligence and great discretion demand from such persons satisfactory explanations concerning reports affecting their Christian character. This duty is more imperative when those who deem themselves aggrieved by injurious reports shall ask an investigation.

If such investigation, however originating, should result in raising a strong presumption of the guilt of the party involved, the court shall institute process, and shall appoint a prosecutor to prepare the indictment and to conduct the case. This prosecutor shall be a member of the court, except that in a case before the Session, he may be any communing member of the same congregation with the accused.

31-3. The original and only parties in a case of process are the accuser and the accused. The accuser is always the Covenant Presbyterian Church, whose honor and purity are to be maintained. The prosecutor, whether voluntary or appointed, is always the representative of the Church, and as such has all its rights in the case. In appellate courts the parties are known as appellant and appellee.

31-4. Every indictment shall begin:

“In the name of the Covenant Presbyterian Church,” and shall conclude, **“against the peace, unity and purity of the Church, and the honor and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the King and Head thereof.”**

In every case the Church is the injured and accusing party, against the accused.

31-5. An injured party shall not become a prosecutor of personal offenses without having tried the means of reconciliation and of reclaiming the offender, required by Christ.

“Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established” (Matthew 18:15-16).

A church court, however, may judicially investigate personal offenses as if general when the interest of religion seem to demand it. So, also, those to whom private offenses are known cannot become prosecutors without having previously endeavored to remove the scandal by private means.

31-6. When the offense is general, the case may be conducted either by any person appearing as prosecutor or by a prosecutor appointed by the court.

31-7. When the prosecution is instituted by the court, the previous steps required by our Lord in the case of personal offenses are not necessary. There are many cases, however, in which it will promote the interests of religion to send a committee to converse in a private

manner with the offender, and endeavor to bring him to a sense of his guilt, before instituting actual process.

31-8. Great caution ought to be exercised in receiving accusations from any person who is known to indulge a malignant spirit towards the accused; who is not of good character; who is himself under censure or process; who is deeply interested in any respect in the conviction of the accused; or who is known to be litigious, rash or highly imprudent.

31-9. Every voluntary prosecutor shall be previously warned, that if he fail to show probable cause of the charges, he may himself be censured as a slanderer of the brethren.

31-10. When a member of a church court is under process, all his official functions may be suspended at the court's discretion; but this shall never be done in the way of censure.

31-11. In the discussion of all questions arising in his own case, the accused shall exercise the rights of defendant only, not of judge.

CHAPTER 32

General Provisions Applicable to all Cases of Process

32-1. It is incumbent on every member of a court of Jesus Christ engaged in a trial of offenders, to bear in mind the inspired injunction:

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

32-2. Process against an offender shall not be commenced unless some person or persons undertake to make out the charge; or unless the court finds it necessary, for the honor of religion, itself to take the step provided for in *BCO* 31-2.

32-3. It is appropriate that with each citation the moderator or clerk call the attention of the parties to the Rules of Discipline (*BCO* 27 through 46) and assist the parties to obtain access to them. When a charge is laid before the Session or Presbytery, it shall be reduced to writing, and nothing shall be done at the first meeting of the court, unless by consent of parties, except:

1. to appoint a prosecutor,
2. to order the indictment drawn and a copy, along with names of witnesses then known to support it, served on the accused, and
3. to cite the accused to appear and be heard at another meeting which shall not be sooner than ten days after such citation.

At the second meeting of the court the charges shall be read to the accused, if present, and he shall be called upon to say whether he be guilty or not.

If the accused confesses, the court may deal with him according to its discretion; if he plead and take issue, the trial shall be scheduled and all parties and their witnesses cited to appear. The trial shall not be sooner than fourteen (14) days after such citation.

Accused parties may plead in writing when they cannot be personally present. Parties necessarily absent should have counsel assigned to them.

32-4. The citation shall be issued and signed by the moderator or clerk by order and in the name of the court. He shall also issue citations to such witnesses as either party shall nominate to appear on his behalf. Indictments and citations shall be delivered in person or in another manner providing verification of the date of receipt. Compliance with these requirements shall be deemed to have been fulfilled if a party cannot be located after diligent inquiry or if a party refuses to accept delivery.

32-5. In drawing the indictment, the times, places and circumstances should, if possible, be particularly stated, that the accused may have an opportunity to make his defense.

32-6. a. When an accused person shall refuse to obey a citation, he shall be cited a second time. This second citation shall be accompanied with a notice that if he does not appear at the time appointed (unless providentially hindered, which fact he must make known to the court) he shall be dealt with for his contumacy (cf. *BCO* 33-2; 34-4).

b. When an accused person shall appear and refuse to plead, or otherwise refuse to cooperate with lawful proceedings, he shall be dealt with for his contumacy (cf. *BCO* 33-2; 34-4).

32-7. The time which must elapse between the serving of the first citation on the accused person, and the meeting of the court at which he is to appear, shall be at least ten (10) days. The time allotted for his appearance on the subsequent citation shall be left to the discretion of the court, provided that it be quite sufficient for a seasonable and convenient compliance with the citation.

32-8. When the offense with which an accused person stands charged took place at a distance, and it is inconvenient for the witnesses to appear before the court having jurisdiction, that court may either appoint a commission of its body, or request the coordinate court contiguous to the place where the facts occurred to take the testimony for it. The accused shall always have reasonable notice of the time and place of the meeting of this commission or coordinate court.

32-9. When an offense, alleged to have been committed at a distance, is not likely otherwise to become known to the court having jurisdiction, it shall be the duty of the court within whose bounds the facts occurred, after satisfying itself that there is probable ground for accusation, to send notice to the court having jurisdiction, which shall at once proceed against the accused; or the whole case may be remitted for trial to the coordinate court within whose bounds the offense is alleged to have been committed.

32-10. Before proceeding to trial, courts ought to ascertain that their citations have been duly served.

32-11. In every process, if deemed expedient there may be a committee appointed, which shall be called the Judicial Committee, and whose duty it shall be to digest and arrange all the papers, and to prescribe, under the direction of the court, the whole order of the proceedings. The members of this committee shall be entitled, notwithstanding their performance of this duty, to sit and vote in the case as members of the court.

32-12. When the trial is about to begin, it shall be the duty of the moderator solemnly to announce from the chair that the court is about to pass to the consideration of the case, and to enjoin on the members to recollect and regard their high character as judges of a court of Jesus Christ, and the solemn duty in which they are about to engage.

32-13. In order that the trial may be fair and impartial, the witnesses shall be examined in the presence of the accused, or at least after he shall have received due citation to attend.

Witnesses may be cross-examined by both parties, and any questions asked must be pertinent to the issue.

32-14. On all questions arising in the progress of a trial, the discussion shall first be between the parties; and when they have been heard, they may be required to withdraw from the court until the members deliberate upon and decide the point.

32-15. When a court of first resort proceeds to the trial of a case, the following order shall be observed:

1. The moderator shall charge the court.
2. The indictment shall be read, and the answer of the accused heard.
3. The witnesses for the prosecutor and then those for the accused shall be examined.
4. The parties shall be heard: first, the prosecutor, and then the accused, and the prosecutor shall close.
5. The roll shall be called, and the members may express their opinion in the case.
6. The vote shall be taken, the verdict announced and judgment entered on the records.

32-16. Either party may, for cause, challenge the right of any member to sit in the trial of the case, which question shall be decided by the other members of the court.

32-17. Pending the trial of a case, any member of the court who shall express his opinion of its merits to either party, or to any person not a member of the court; or who shall absent himself from any sitting without the permission of the court, or satisfactory reasons rendered, shall be thereby disqualified from taking part in the subsequent proceedings.

32-18. Minutes of the trial shall be kept by the clerk, which shall exhibit the charges, the answer, record of the testimony, as defined by *BCO* 35-7, and all such acts, orders, and decisions of the court relating to the case, as either party may desire, and also the judgment.

The clerk shall without delay assemble the Record of the Case which shall consist of the charges, the answer, the citations and returns thereto, and the minutes herein required to be kept.

The parties shall be allowed copies of the Record of the Case at their own expense if they demand them.

When a case is removed by appeal or complaint, the lower court shall transmit "the Record" thus prepared to the higher court with the addition of the notice of appeal or complaint, and the reasons therefor, if any shall have been filed.

Nothing which is not contained in this "Record" shall be taken into consideration by the higher court. On the final decision of a case in a higher court, the judgment shall be sent down to the court in which the case originated.

32-19. No professional counsel shall be permitted as such to appear and plead in cases of process in any court; but an accused person may, if he desires it, be represented before the Session by any communing member of the same particular church, or before any other court,

by any member of that court. A member of the court so employed shall not be allowed to sit in judgment in the case.

32-20. Process, in case of scandal, shall commence within the space of one year after the offense was committed, unless it has recently become flagrant. When, however, a church member shall commit an offense, after removing to a place far distant from his former residence, and where his connection with the church is unknown, in consequence of which process cannot be instituted within the time above specified, the recent discovery of the church membership of the individual shall be considered as equivalent to the offense itself having recently become flagrant. The same principle, in like circumstances, shall also apply to ministers.

CHAPTER 33

Special Rules Pertaining to Process Before Sessions

33-1. Process against all church members, other than ministers of the Gospel, shall be entered before the Session of the church to which such members belong, except in cases of appeal. However, if the Session refuses to act in doctrinal cases or instances of public scandal and two other Sessions of churches in the same Presbytery request the Presbytery of which the church is a member to initiate proper or appropriate action in a case of process and thus assume jurisdiction and authority, the Presbytery shall do so.

33-2. When an accused person is found contumacious (cf. 32-6), he shall be immediately suspended from the sacraments (and if an officer from his office) for his contumacy. Record shall be made of the fact and of the charges under which he was arraigned, and the censure may be made public, should this be deemed expedient by the Session. The censure shall in no case be removed until the offender has not only repented of his contumacy, but has also given satisfaction in relation to the charges against him.

33-3. If after further endeavor by the court to bring the accused to a sense of his guilt, he persists in his contumacy, he shall be excommunicated from the Church.

33-4. When it is impracticable immediately to commence process against an accused church member, the Session may, if it thinks the edification of the Church requires it, prevent the accused from approaching the Lord's Table until the charges against him can be examined.

Chapter 34

Special Rules Pertaining to Process Against an Elder

34-1. Process against an elder shall be entered before the Presbytery of which he is a member. However, if the Presbytery refuses to act in doctrinal cases or cases of public scandal and two other Presbyteries request the General Assembly to assume original jurisdiction (to first receive and initially hear and determine), the General Assembly shall do so.

34-2. As no minister ought, on account of his office, to be screened in his sin, or slightly censured, so scandalous charges ought not to be received against him on slight grounds.

34-3. If anyone knows an elder to be guilty of a private offense, he should warn him in private. But if the offense be persisted in, or become public, he should bring the case to the attention of some other minister of the Presbytery.

34-4. a. When an elder accused of an offense is found contumacious (cf. 32-6), he shall be immediately suspended from the sacraments and his office for his contumacy. Record shall be made of the fact and of the charges under which he was arraigned, and the censure shall be made public. The censure shall in no case be removed until the offender has not only repented of his contumacy, but has also given satisfaction in relation to the charges against him.

b. If after further endeavor by the court to bring the accused to a sense of his guilt, he persists in his contumacy, he shall be deposed and excommunicated from the Church.

34-5. Heresy and schism may be of such a nature as to warrant deposition; but errors ought to be carefully considered, whether they strike at the vitals of religion and are industriously spread, or whether they arise from the weakness of the human understanding and are not likely to do much injury.

34-6. If the Presbytery find on trial that the matter complained of amounts to no more than such acts of infirmity as may be amended, so that little or nothing remains to hinder the minister's usefulness, it shall take all prudent measures to remove the scandal.

34-7. When an elder, pending a trial, shall make confession, if the matter be base and flagitious, such as drunkenness, uncleanness, or crimes of a greater nature, however penitent he may appear to the satisfaction of all, the court shall without delay impose definite suspension or depose him from the ministry.

34-8. An elder under indefinite suspension from his office or deposed for scandalous conduct shall not be restored, even on the deepest sorrow for his sin, until he shall exhibit for a considerable time such an eminently exemplary, humble and edifying life and testimony as shall heal the wound made by his scandal. A deposed minister shall in no case be restored until it shall appear that the general sentiment of the Church is strongly in his favor, and demands his restoration; and then only by the court inflicting the censure, or with that court's consent.

34-9. When an elder is deposed, his pastoral relation shall be dissolved; but when he is suspended from office it shall be left to the discretion of the Presbytery whether the censure shall include the dissolution of the pastoral relation.

34-10. Whenever an elder shall habitually fail to be engaged in the regular discharge of his official functions, it shall be the duty of the Presbytery, at a stated meeting, to inquire into the cause of such dereliction and, if necessary, to institute judicial proceedings against him for breach of his covenant engagement. If it shall appear that his neglect proceeds only from his lack of acceptance to the Church, Presbytery may, upon the same principle upon which it withdraws license from a licentiate for lack of evidence of the divine call, divest him of his office without censure, even against his will, a majority of two-thirds (2/3) being necessary for this purpose.

In such a case, the clerk shall under the order of the Presbytery forthwith deliver to the minister concerned a written note that, at the next stated meeting, the question of his being so dealt with is to be considered. This notice shall distinctly state the grounds for this proceeding. The party thus notified shall be heard in his own defense; and if the decision pass against him he may appeal, as if he had been tried after the usual forms. This principle may apply, with any necessary changes, to deacons.

Chapter 35

Evidence

35-1. All persons of proper age and intelligence are competent witnesses, except such as do not believe in the existence of God, or a future state of rewards and punishments. The accused party may be allowed, but shall not be compelled to testify; but the accuser shall be required to testify, on the demand of the accused. Either party has the right to challenge a witness whom he believes to be incompetent, and the court shall examine and decide upon his competency. It belongs to the court to judge the degree of credibility to be attached to all evidence.

35-2. A husband or wife shall not be compelled to bear testimony against one another in any court.

35-3. The testimony of more than one witness shall be necessary in order to establish any charge; yet if, in addition to the testimony of one witness, corroborative evidence be produced, the offense may be considered to be proved.

35-4. No witness afterwards to be examined, unless a member of the court, shall be present during the examination of another witness on the same case, if either party object.

35-5. Witnesses shall be examined first by the party introducing them; then cross-examined by the opposite party; after which any member of the court, or either party, may put additional interrogatories. No question shall be put or answered except by permission of the moderator, subject to an appeal to the court. The court shall not permit questions frivolous or irrelevant to the charge at issue.

35-6. The oath or affirmation to a witness shall be administered by the Moderator in the following or like terms:

Do you solemnly promise, in the presence of God, that you will declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, according to the best of your knowledge in the matter in which you are called to witness, as you shall answer it to the great Judge of the living and the dead?

If, however, at any time a witness should present himself before a court, who for conscientious reasons prefers to swear or affirm in any other manner, he should be allowed to do so.

35-7. All testimony shall be recorded (transcription, audiotape, videotape, or some other electronic means) and witnesses informed of such prior to testifying. Such recording becomes part of the Record of the Case. However, in order to be referenced in written or oral briefs, such recording must be transcribed and the transcription authenticated by the trial court. The court of final appeal may assess the cost of transcription equitably among the parties.

35-8. The records of a court or any part of them, whether original or transcribed, if regularly authenticated by the moderator and clerk, or by either of them, shall be deemed good and sufficient evidence in every other court.

35-9. In like manner, testimony taken by one court and regularly certified shall be received by every other court as no less valid than if it had been taken by itself.

35-10. When it is not convenient for a court to have the whole or perhaps any part of the testimony in any particular case taken in its presence, a commission shall be appointed, or

coordinate court requested, to take the testimony in question, which shall be considered as if taken in the presence of the court.

Due notice of the commission or coordinate court, and of the time and place of its meeting, shall be given to the opposite party, that he may have an opportunity of attending. If the accused shall desire on his part to take testimony at a distance for his own exculpation, he shall give notice to the court of the time and place at which it shall be taken, in order that a commission or coordinate court, as in the former case, may be appointed for the purpose. Testimony may be taken on written interrogatories by filing the same with the clerk of the court having jurisdiction of the case, and giving two weeks' notice thereof to the adverse party, during which time he may file cross-interrogatories, if he desire it. Testimony shall then be taken by the commission or coordinate court in answer to the direct and cross-interrogatories, if such are filed, and no notice need be given of the time and place of taking the testimony.

35-11. A member of the court who has given testimony in a case becomes disqualified for sitting as a judge if either party makes objection.

35-12. An officer or private member of the church refusing to testify may be censured for contumacy.

35-13. If after trial before any court new testimony be discovered, which the accused believes important, it shall be his right to ask a new trial and it shall be within the power of the court to grant his request.

35-14. If, in the prosecution of an appeal, new evidence be offered which, in the judgment of the appellate court, has an important bearing on the case, it shall be competent for that court to refer the case to the lower court for a new trial; or, with the consent of parties, to admit the evidence and proceed with the case.

Chapter 36

Infliction of Church Censures

36-1. When any member or officer of the Church shall be found guilty of an offense the court shall proceed with all tenderness and shall deal with its offending brother in the spirit of meekness, the members considering themselves lest they also be tempted.

36-2. Church censures and the modes of administering them should be suited to the nature of the offenses. For private offenses, censure should be administered in the presence of the court alone, or in private by one or more members of the court. In the case of public offenses, the degree of censure and mode of administering it shall be within the discretion of the court, acting in accordance with paragraphs below which deal with particular censures.

36-3. The Censure of Admonition should be administered in private by one or more members of the court if the offense is known only to a few and is not aggravated in character. If the offense is public the Admonition should be administered by the moderator in presence of the court and may also be announced in public should the court deem it expedient.

36-4. Definite suspension from office should be administered in the presence of the court alone or in open session of the court, as it may deem best, and public announcement thereof shall be at the court's discretion.

36-5. Indefinite suspension from office or the Sacraments should be administered after the manner prescribed for definite suspension, but with added solemnity, that the indefinite

suspension may be the means of impressing the mind of the delinquent with a proper sense of his danger. Indefinite suspension should also be administered under the blessing of God of leading him to repentance. When the court has resolved to pass this sentence, the moderator shall address the offending brother to the following purpose:

Whereas, you, _____ (here describe the person as an elder, deacon, or private member of the church) are convicted by sufficient proof (or are guilty by your own confession) of the sin of _____ (here insert the offense), we the _____ Presbytery (or Church Session) in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, do now declare you suspended from the Sacraments of the Church (and from the exercise of your office), until you give satisfactory evidence of repentance.

To this shall be added such advice or admonition as may be judged necessary, and the whole shall be concluded with prayer to almighty God that He would follow this act of discipline with His blessing.

36-6. Excommunication is to be administered according to one or other of the two modes laid down for indefinite suspension, or to be inflicted in public as the court may decide. In administering this censure the moderator of the Session shall make a statement of the several steps which have been taken with respect to the offending brother, and of the decision to cut him off from the communion of the church. He shall then show from Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 the authority of the church to cast out unworthy members, and shall explain the nature, use and consequences of this censure. He shall then administer the censure in the words following:

Whereas, _____, a member of this church has been by sufficient proof convicted of the sin of _____, and after much admonition and prayer, obstinately refuses to hear the Church, and has manifested no evidence of repentance: Therefore, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, we, the Session of _____ church do pronounce him to be excluded from the Sacraments, and cut off from the fellowship of the Church.

Prayer shall then be made that by God's blessing this solemn action of the court may issue in the repentance and restoration of the offender, and in the establishment of all true believers.

36-7. The censure of deposition shall be administered by the moderator in the words following:

Whereas, _____, an elder (or deacon) of this church, has been proved, by sufficient evidence to be guilty of the sin of _____, we, the _____ Presbytery (or Church Session), do adjudge him disqualified for the office of the Christian ministry (or ruling eldership, or deaconship), and therefore we do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, depose from the office of a teaching elder (or ruling elder or deacon) the said _____, and do prohibit him from exercising any of the functions thereof.

If the censure includes suspension or excommunication, the moderator shall proceed to say:

We do moreover, by the same authority, suspend the said _____ from the Sacraments of the Church, until he shall exhibit satisfactory evidence of sincere repentance,

or

We do moreover, by the same authority, exclude the said _____ from the Sacraments, and cut him off from the fellowship of the Church.

The sentence of deposition ought to be inflicted with solemnities similar to those already prescribed in the case of excommunication.

Chapter 37

The Removal of Censure

37-1. A person who has been definitely suspended from office shall be restored by the court at the end of the term of his suspension by declaring words of the following import to him:

Whereas, you _____ have been debarred from the office of elder, (or deacon), but have now fulfilled the time of your censure, we, of the _____ Presbytery (or Church Session) do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, absolve you from the sentence of suspension and do restore you to the exercise of your said office, and all the functions thereof.

37-2. After any person has been indefinitely suspended from the Sacraments, it is proper that the rulers of the church should frequently converse with him as well as pray with him and for him, that it would please God to give him repentance.

37-3. When the court shall be satisfied as to the reality of the repentance of an indefinitely suspended offender, he shall be admitted to profess his repentance, either in the presence of the court alone or publicly. At this time the offender shall be restored to the Sacraments of the Church, and/or to his office, if such shall be the judgment of the court. The restoration shall be declared to the penitent in the words of the following import:

Whereas, you, _____, have been debarred from the Sacraments of the Church (and/or from the office of elder, or deacon), but have now manifested such repentance as satisfies the church, we, the _____ Church Session (or Presbytery), do hereby, in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, absolve you from the said sentence of suspension from the Sacraments (and/or your office) and do restore you to the full communion of the Church (and/or the exercise of your said office, and all the functions thereof).

After which there shall be prayer and thanksgiving.

37-4. When an excommunicated person shall be so affected with his state as to be brought to repentance, and to desire to be readmitted to the communion of the church, the Session, having obtained sufficient evidence of his sincere penitence, shall proceed to restore him. This may be done in the presence of the court, or of the congregation as seems best to the Session. On the day appointed for his restoration, the minister shall call upon the excommunicated person and propose to him in the presence of the court or the congregation the following questions:

1. **Do you, from a deep sense of your great wickedness, freely confess your sins in thus rebelling against God, and in refusing to hear His Church; and do you acknowledge that you have been in justice and mercy cut off from the communion of the Church?**

Answer, **I do.**

2. **Do you now voluntarily profess your sincere repentance and contrition for your sin and obstinacy; and do you humbly ask the forgiveness of God and His Church?**

Answer, **I do.**

3. **Do you sincerely promise, through divine grace, to live in all humbleness of mind and circumspection; and to endeavor to adorn by a holy life the doctrine of God our Saviour?**

Answer, **I do.**

Here the minister shall give the penitent a suitable exhortation, encouraging and comforting him. Then he shall pronounce the sentence of restoration in the following words:

Whereas, you _____, have been shut out from the communion of the church, but now have manifested such repentance as satisfies the Church; in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by His authority, we, the Session of this church, do declare you absolved from the sentence of excommunication formerly pronounced against you, and we do restore you to the communion of the Church, that you may be a partaker of all the benefits of the Lord Jesus to your eternal salvation.

The whole shall be concluded with prayer and thanksgiving.

37-5. The restoration of a deposed officer, after public confession has been made in a manner similar to that prescribed in the case of the removal of censure from an excommunicated person, shall be announced to him by the Moderator in the following form, namely:

Whereas, you, _____, formerly an elder of this Presbytery (or a deacon of this church), have been deposed from your office, but have now manifested such repentance as satisfies the Church; in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by His authority, we, the _____ Presbytery (or Church Session) do declare you absolved from the said sentence of deposition formerly pronounced against you; and we do furthermore restore you to your said office, and to the exercise of all the functions thereof, whenever you may be orderly called thereto.

After this there shall be prayer and thanksgiving, and the members of the court shall extend to him the right hand of fellowship.

37-6. When a ruling elder or deacon has been absolved from the censure of deposition, he cannot be allowed to resume the exercise of his office in the church without re-election by the people.

37-7. When a person under censure shall remove to a part of the country remote from the court by which he was sentenced, and shall desire to profess repentance and obtain restoration, it shall be lawful for the court, if it deems it expedient, to transmit a certified

copy of its proceedings to the Session (or Presbytery) where the delinquent resides, which shall take up the case and proceed with it as though it had originated with itself.

37-8. In the restoration of an elder who is under indefinite suspension from the Sacraments, and/or his office, or has been deposed, it is the duty of the Presbytery to proceed with great caution. It should first admit him to the Sacraments, if he has been debarred from them. Afterwards it should grant him the privilege of preaching on probation for a time, so as to test the sincerity of his repentance and prospect of his usefulness. When satisfied in these respects, the Presbytery shall take steps to restore him to his office. But the case shall always be under judicial consideration until the declaration of restoration has been pronounced.

37-9. In the case of the removal of censures from, or the restoration of, an elder, jurisdiction shall be as follows:

a. If the censure(s) does not include excommunication, the presbytery inflicting the censure(s) shall retain the authority to remove the censure(s) and, at its discretion, restore him to office. This authority is retained by the presbytery even when a divested or deposed minister is assigned, under the provisions of *BCO* 46-8, to a session.

b. If the censure includes excommunication, the penitent may only be restored to the communion of the church through a session (*BCO* 1-3; 6-4; 57-4; 57-5; 57-6). Once the penitent is restored, and therefore a member of a local church, the authority to remove any other censure(s) in respect to office, concurrently imposed with that of excommunication shall belong to the court originally imposing such censure(s).

Chapter 38

Cases Without Process

38-1. When any person shall come forward and make his offense known to the court, a full statement of the facts shall be recorded and judgment rendered without process. In handling a confession of guilt, it is essential that the person intends to confess and permit the court to render judgment without process. Statements made by him in the presence of the court must not be taken as a basis of a judgment without process except by his consent. In the event a confession is intended, a full statement of the facts should be approved by the accused, and by the court, before the court proceeds to a judgment. The accused has the right of complaint against the judgment.

38-2. A minister of the Gospel against whom there are no charges, if fully satisfied in his own conscience that God has not called him to the ministry, or if he has satisfactory evidence of his inability to serve the Church with acceptance, may report these facts at a stated meeting of Presbytery. At the next stated meeting, if after full deliberation the Presbytery shall concur with him in judgment, it may divest him of his office without censure. This provision shall in like manner apply with any necessary changes to the case of ruling elders and deacons; but in all such cases the Session of the church to which the ruling elder or the deacon who seeks demission belongs shall act as the Presbytery acts in similar cases where an elder is concerned.

38-3. a. When a member or officer in the Covenant Presbyterian Church shall attempt to withdraw from the communion of this branch of the visible Church by affiliating with some other branch (*BCO* 2-2), if at the time of the attempt to withdraw he is in good standing, the irregularity shall be recorded, his new membership acknowledged, and his name removed from the roll. But if at the time of the attempt to withdraw there is a record of an investigation in process (*BCO* 31-2), or there are charges (*BCO* 32-3)

concerning the member or minister, the court of original jurisdiction may retain his name on the roll and conduct the case, communicating the outcome upon completion of the proceedings to that member or minister. If the court does not conduct the case, his new membership shall be acknowledged, his name removed from the roll, and, at the request of the receiving branch, the matters under investigation or the charges shall be communicated to them.

b. When a member or minister of the Covenant Presbyterian Church shall attempt to withdraw from the communion of this branch of the visible Church by affiliating with a body judged by the court of original jurisdiction as failing to maintain the Word and Sacraments in their fundamental integrity (*BCO* 2-2), that member or minister shall be warned of his danger, and if he persists, his name shall be erased from the roll, thereby, so far as the Covenant Presbyterian Church is concerned, he is deemed no longer to be a member in any body which rightly maintains the Word and Sacraments in their fundamental integrity, and if an officer, thereby withdrawing from him all authority to exercise his office as derived from this Church. When so acting the court shall make full record of the matter and shall notify the offender of its action.

38-4. When a member of a particular church has willfully neglected the church for a period of one year, or has made it known that he has no intention of fulfilling the church vows, then the Session, continuing to exercise pastoral discipline (*BCO* 27-1a and 27-4) in the spirit of Galatians 6:1, shall remind the member, if possible both in person and in writing, of the declarations and promises by which he entered into a solemn covenant with God and His Church (*BCO* 57-5, nos. 3-5), and warn him that, if he persists, his name shall be erased from the roll.

If after diligently pursuing such pastoral discipline, and after further inquiry and due delay, the Session is of the judgment that the member will not fulfill his membership obligations in this or any other branch of the Visible Church (cf. *BCO* 2-2), then the Session shall erase his name from the roll. This erasure is an act of pastoral discipline (*BCO* 27-1a) without process. The Session shall notify the person, if possible, whose name has been removed.

Notwithstanding the above, if a member thus warned makes a written request for process (i.e., *BCO* Chapters 31-33, 35-36), the Session shall grant such a request. Further, if the Session determines that any offense of such a member is of the nature that process is necessary, the Session may institute such process.

Chapter 39

Modes Under Which the Proceedings of Lower Courts Come Under the Supervision of Higher Courts

39-1. The acts and decisions of a lower court are brought under the supervision of a higher court in one or another of the following modes:

1. Review and Control;
2. Reference;
3. Appeal; and
4. Complaint.

39-2. When the proceedings of a lower court are before a higher court, the members of the lower court shall not lose the right to sit, deliberate and vote in the higher court, except in cases of appeal or complaint.

39-3. While affirming that the Scripture is “the supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined” (*WCF* 1.10), and that the Constitution of the Covenant Presbyterian Church is “subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the inerrant Word of God” (*BCO* Preface, III), and while affirming also that this Constitution is fallible (*WCF* 31.3), the Covenant Presbyterian Church affirms that this subordinate and fallible Constitution has been “adopted by the church” (*BCO* Preface, III) “as standard expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to both faith and practice” (*BCO* 29-1) and as setting forth a form of government and discipline “in conformity with the general principles of biblical polity” (*BCO* 21-5.3). To insure that this Constitution is not amended, violated or disregarded in judicial process, any review of the judicial proceedings of a lower court by a higher court shall be guided by the following principles:

1. A higher court, reviewing a lower court, should limit itself to the issues raised by the parties to the case in the original (lower) court. Further, the higher court should resolve such issues by applying the Constitution of the church, as previously established through the constitutional process.
2. A higher court should ordinarily exhibit great deference to a lower court regarding those factual matters which the lower court is more competent to determine, because of its proximity to the events in question, and because of its personal knowledge and observations of the parties and witnesses involved. Therefore, a higher court should not reverse a factual finding of a lower court, unless there is clear error on the part of the lower court.
3. A higher court should ordinarily exhibit great deference to a lower court regarding those matters of discretion and judgment which can only be addressed by a court with familiar acquaintance of the events and parties. Such matters of discretion and judgment would include, but not be limited to: the moral character of candidates for sacred office, the appropriate censure to impose after a disciplinary trial, or judgment about the comparative credibility of conflicting witnesses. Therefore, a higher court should not reverse such a judgment by a lower court, unless there is clear error on the part of the lower court.
4. The higher court does have the power and obligation of judicial review, which cannot be satisfied by always deferring to the findings of a lower court. Therefore, a higher court should not consider itself obliged to exhibit the same deference to a lower court when the issues being reviewed involve the interpretation of the Constitution of the Church. Regarding such issues, the higher court has the duty and authority to interpret and apply the Constitution of the Church according to its best abilities and understanding, regardless of the opinion of the lower court.

Chapter 40

General Review & Control

40-1. It is the right and duty of every court above the Session to review, at least once a year, the records of the court next below, and if any lower court fails to present its records for this purpose, the higher court may require them to be produced immediately, or at any time fixed by this higher court.

40-2. In reviewing records of a lower court the higher court is to examine:

1. Whether the proceedings have been correctly recorded;
2. Whether they have been regular and in accordance with the Constitution;
3. Whether they have been wise, equitable and suited to promote the welfare of the Church;
4. Whether the lawful injunctions of the higher court have been obeyed.

40-3. It is ordinarily sufficient for the higher court merely to record in its own minutes and in the records reviewed whether it approves, disapproves or corrects the records in any particular; but should any serious irregularity be discovered the higher court may require its review and correction by the lower. Proceedings in judicial cases, however, shall not be dealt with under review and control when notice of appeal or complaint has been given the lower court; and no judgment of a lower court in a judicial case shall be reversed except by appeal or complaint.

40-4. Courts may sometimes entirely neglect to perform their duty, by which neglect heretical opinions or corrupt practices may be allowed to gain ground; or offenders of a very gross character may be suffered to escape; or some circumstances in their proceedings of very great irregularity may not be distinctly recorded by them. In any of these cases their records will by no means exhibit to the higher court a full view of their proceedings. If, therefore, the next higher court be well advised that any such neglect or irregularity has occurred on the part of the lower court, it is incumbent on it to take cognizance of the same, and to examine, deliberate and judge in the whole matter as completely as if it had been recorded, and thus brought up by review of its records.

40-5. When any court having appellate jurisdiction shall receive a credible report with respect to the court next below of any important delinquency or grossly unconstitutional proceedings of such court, the first step shall be to cite the court alleged to have offended to appear before the court having appellate jurisdiction, or its commission, by representative or in writing, at a specified time and place, and to show what the lower court has done or failed to do in the case in question.

The court thus issuing the citation may reverse or redress the proceedings of the court below in other than judicial cases; or it may censure the delinquent court; or it may remit the whole matter to the delinquent court with an injunction to take it up and dispose of it in a constitutional manner; or it may stay all further proceedings in the case; as circumstances may require.

40-6. In process against a lower court, the trial shall be conducted according to the rules provided for process against individuals, so far as they may be applicable.

Chapter 41

References

41-1. A reference is a written representation and application made by a lower court to a higher for advice or other action on a matter pending before the lower court, and is ordinarily to be made to the next higher court.

41-2. Among proper subjects for reference are matters that are new, delicate or difficult; or on which the members of the lower court are very seriously divided; or which relate to questions involving the Constitution and legal procedures respecting which the lower court feels the need of guidance.

41-3. In making a reference the lower court may ask for advice only, or for final disposition of the matter referred; and in particular it may refer a judicial case with request for its trial and decision by the higher court.

41-4. A reference may be presented to the higher court by one or more representatives appointed by the lower court for this purpose. It should be accompanied with so much of the record as shall be necessary for proper understanding and consideration of the matter referred.

41-5. Although references are sometimes proper, in general it is better that every court should discharge the duty assigned it under the law of the Church. A higher court is not required to accede to the request of the lower, but it should ordinarily give advice when so requested.

41-6. When a court makes a reference, it ought to have all the testimony and other documents duly prepared, produced and in perfect readiness, so that the higher court may be able to fully consider and handle the case with as little difficulty or delay as possible.

Chapter 42

Appeals

42-1. An appeal is the transfer to a higher court of a judicial case on which judgment has been rendered in a lower court, and is allowable only to the party against whom the decision has been rendered. The parties shall be known as the appellant and appellee. An appeal cannot be made to any court other than the next higher, except with its consent.

42-2. Only those who have submitted to a regular trial are entitled to an appeal.

42-3. The grounds of appeal are such as the following: any irregularity in the proceedings of the lower court; refusal of reasonable indulgence to a party on trial; receiving improper or declining to receive proper evidence; hurrying to a decision before all the testimony is taken; manifestation of prejudice in the case; and mistake or injustice in the judgment and censure.

42-4. Notice of appeal may be given the court before its adjournment. Written notice of appeal, with supporting reasons, shall be filed by the appellant with both the clerk of the lower court and the clerk of the higher court, within thirty (30) days following the meeting of the court. No attempt should be made to circularize the courts to which appeal is being made by either party before the case is heard.

42-5. It shall be the duty of the clerk of the lower court to file with the clerk of the higher court, not more than thirty (30) days after receipt of notice of appeal, a copy of all proceedings in connection with the case, including the notice of appeal and reasons therefor, the response of the lower court, the evidence, and any papers bearing on the case, which together shall be known as "the Record of the Case", and the higher court shall not admit or consider anything not found in this "Record" without the consent of the parties in the case. Should new evidence come to light the case shall be remanded to the lower court from which the appeal was made, unless both parties consent to admit the new evidence and proceed with the case.

42-6. Notice of appeal shall have the effect of suspending the judgment of the lower court until the case has been finally decided in the higher court. However, the court of original jurisdiction may, for sufficient reasons duly recorded, prevent the appellant from approaching the Lord's Table, and if an officer, prevent him from exercising some or all his official

functions, until the case is finally decided (cf. *BCO* 31-10; 33-3). This shall never be done in the way of censure.

42-7. If a lower court shall neglect to send up “the Record of the Case” or any part of it, to the injury of the appellant, it shall receive a proper rebuke from the higher court, and the judgment from which the appeal has been taken shall be suspended until “the Record” is produced upon which the issue can be fairly tried.

42-8. After a higher court has decided that an appeal is in order and should be entertained by the court, the court shall hear the case, or in accordance with the provisions of *BCO* 15-2 and 15-3, appoint a commission to do so. At the hearing, after the Record has been read, each side should be allotted not over thirty (30) minutes for oral argument, the appellant having the right of opening and closing the argument. After the hearing has been concluded, the court or commission should go into closed session, and discuss the merits of the case. The vote then should be taken, without further debate, on each specification in this form:

Shall this specification of error be sustained?

If the court or commission deem it wise, it may adopt a minute explanatory of its action, which shall become a part of its Record of the Case. The court or commission shall designate one of its members to write the opinion, which opinion shall be adopted by the court or commission as its opinion.

42-9. The decision of the higher court may be to affirm in whole or in part; to reverse in whole or in part; to render the decision that should have been rendered; or to remand the case to the lower court for a new trial. In every case a written opinion shall be prepared, and a copy of the opinion and judgment entered will be delivered personally or mailed to the lower court and the appellant, with a written receipt required.

42-10. An appellant may represent himself or be represented as provided in *BCO* 32-19.

42-11. An appellant shall be considered to have abandoned his appeal if he fails to appear before the higher court, in person or by counsel, for a hearing thereof, after he has been properly notified; but an appellant may waive, in writing, his right to appear with permission of the court and not be considered to have abandoned his case. In case of such failure to appear, the judgment of the lower court will stand unless the appellant gives to the court a prompt and satisfactory explanation.

42-12. If an appellant manifests a litigious or otherwise un-Christian spirit in the prosecution of his appeal, he shall receive a suitable rebuke by the appellate court.

Chapter 43

Complaints

43-1. A complaint is a written representation made against some act or decision of a court of the Church. It is the right of any communing member of the Church in good standing to make complaint against any action of a court to whose jurisdiction he is subject, except that no complaint is allowable in a judicial case in which an appeal is pending.

43-2. A complaint shall first be made to the court whose act or decision is alleged to be in error. Written notice of complaint, with supporting reasons, shall be filed with the clerk of the court within thirty (30) days following the meeting of the court. The court shall consider the complaint at its next stated meeting, or at a called meeting prior to its next stated meeting.

No attempt should be made to circularize the court to which complaint is being made by either party.

43-3. If, after considering a complaint, the court alleged to be delinquent or in error is of the opinion that it has not erred, and denies the complaint, the complainant may make complaint to the next higher court. If the court fails to consider the complaint by or at its next stated meeting, the complainant may make complaint to the next higher court. Written notice of complaint, together with supporting reasons, shall be filed with both the clerk of the lower court and the clerk of the higher court within thirty (30) days following the meeting of the lower court.

43-4. Notice of complaint shall not have the effect of suspending the action against which the complaint is made, unless one-third (1/3) of the members present when the action was taken shall vote for its suspension, until the final decision in the higher court.

43-5. The court against which complaint is made shall appoint one or more representatives to defend its action before the higher court, and the parties in the case shall be known as complainant and respondent. The complainant himself may present his complaint, or he may obtain the assistance of a communing member of the Covenant Presbyterian Church, who is in good standing, in presenting his complaint.

43-6. It shall be the duty of the clerk of the lower court to file with the clerk of the higher court, not more than thirty (30) days after receipt of notice of complaint, a copy of all its proceedings in connection with the complaint including the notice of complaint and supporting reasons, the response of the lower court, if any, and any papers bearing on the complaint. If the clerk of the lower court shall neglect to send up the proceedings on the complaint, he shall receive a proper rebuke from the higher court, and the act or decision complained against shall be suspended until the proceedings are produced so that the higher court can fairly consider the complaint.

43-7. The complainant shall be considered to have abandoned his complaint if he fails to appear before the higher court, in person or by counsel, for a hearing thereof, after he has been properly notified; but a complainant may waive, in writing, his right to appear with permission of the court and not be considered to have abandoned his case. In case of such failure to appear, the judgment of the lower court will stand unless the complainant gives to the court a prompt and satisfactory explanation.

43-8. After the higher court has decided that the complaint is in order, the court shall hear the complaint, or in accordance with the provision of *BCO* 15-2 and 15-3, appoint a commission to do so. If the date of the hearing shall, for good cause, be other than the same day it is presented, the court shall notify the complainant and respondent in writing of the date set for the hearing.

43-9. At the hearing, after all the papers bearing on the complaint have been read, the complainant and respondent will be given the opportunity to present argument, the complainant having the right of opening and closing the argument. After the hearing has been concluded, the court or the commission should go into closed session, and discuss and consider the merits of the complaint. The vote should then be taken as to what disposition should be made of the complaint, and the complainant and respondent notified of the court's decision.

43-10. The higher court has power, in its discretion, to annul the whole or any part of the action of a lower court against which complaint has been made, or to send the matter back to the lower court with instructions for a new hearing.

Chapter 44

Vacated

Chapter 45

Dissents, Protests, & Objections

45-1. Any member of a court who had a right to vote on a question, and is not satisfied with the action taken by that court, is entitled to have a dissent or protest recorded. None can join in a dissent or protest against an action of any court except those who had a right to vote in the case. Any member who did not have the right to vote on an appeal or complaint (see *BCO* 39-2), and is not satisfied with the action taken by the court, is entitled to have an objection recorded. A dissent, protest or objection shall be filed with the clerk of the lower court within thirty (30) days following the meeting of the lower court or with the clerk of the General Assembly before its adjournment.

45-2. A dissent is a declaration on the part of one or more members of a minority, expressing a different opinion from the majority in its action on any issue before the court, and may be accompanied with the reasons on which it is founded.

45-3. A protest is a more solemn and formal declaration by members of a minority, bearing their testimony against what they deem an improper or erroneous action on any issue before the court, and is generally accompanied with the reasons on which it is founded.

45-4. An objection is a declaration by one or more members of a court who did not have the right to vote on an appeal or complaint, expressing a different opinion from the decision of the court and may be accompanied with the reasons on which it is founded.

45-5. If a dissent, protest, or objection be couched in temperate language, and be respectful to the court, it shall be recorded; and the court may, if deemed necessary, put an answer to the dissent, protest, or objection on the records along with it. Here the matter shall end, unless the parties obtain permission to withdraw their dissent, protest, or objection absolutely, or for the sake of amendment.

Chapter 46

Jurisdiction

46-1. When a church member shall remove his residence beyond the bounds of the congregation of which he is a member, so that he can no longer regularly attend its services, it shall be his duty to transfer his membership by presenting a certificate of dismissal from the Session of the church of which he is a member to the church with which he wishes to unite. When the church of which he is a member has no Session, or for other good reasons it seems impossible for the member to secure a certificate of dismissal, he may be received by the Session upon other satisfactory testimonials, in which case the church of which he was a member shall be duly notified.

46-2. When a church member shall remove his residence beyond the bounds of the church of which he is a member into the bounds of another, it shall be the duty of the teaching and ruling elders of the church of which he is a member, as far as possible, to continue pastoral oversight of him and to inform him that according to the teaching of our *Book of Church Order* it is his duty to transfer his membership as soon as practicable to the church in whose bounds he is living. It shall also be the duty of the church from whose bounds the member

moved to notify the teaching and ruling elders of a church into whose bounds he has moved and request them to take pastoral oversight of the member, with a view of having him transfer his membership, unless *BCO* 18-7 applies.

If a member, after having thus been advised, shall neglect for one (1) year to have his membership transferred, the Session shall then proceed, according to *BCO* 38-4, except in special cases such as: servicemen, students, etc. The name of any member whose residence has been unknown for one year to the Session shall be removed from the roll and such names are not to be counted in the annual statistical reports, though act of removal should be recorded in the Session's minutes.

If such a person at a later date should appear or desire transfer of his or her letter, the Session will inform the governing body of the inquiring church of their action in removing said person from their roll.

46-3. Members of one church dismissed to join another shall be held to be under the jurisdiction of the Session dismissing them until they form a regular connection with that to which they have been dismissed.

46-4. Associate members are those believers temporarily residing in a location other than their permanent homes. Such believers may become associate members of a particular church without ceasing to be communicant members of their home churches. An associate member shall have all the rights and privileges of that church, with the exception of voting in a congregational or corporation meeting, and holding an office in that church.

46-5. (*Vacated*) [see 38-4]

46-6. When a Presbytery shall dismiss an elder, licentiate or candidate, the name of the Presbytery to which he is dismissed shall be given in the certificate, and he shall remain under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery dismissing him until received by the other.

46-7. No certificate of dismissal from either a Session or a Presbytery shall be valid testimony of good standing for a period longer than one (1) year, unless its earlier presentation be hindered by some providential cause; and such certificates given to persons who have left the bounds of the Session or Presbytery granting them shall certify the standing of such persons only to the time of their leaving those bounds.

46-8. When a Presbytery shall divest a minister of his office without censure, or depose him without excommunication, it shall assign him, to membership in some particular church, subject to the approval of the Session of that church.

This page intentionally left blank.

Parliamentary Motions Guide

from Robert's Rules of Order 1915

YOU WANT TO:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2ND?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?
Fixed Rank Motions - listed in order of precedence. A motion can be introduced if it is higher than the pending motion.						
End the meeting	I move that we adjourn .	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Take a break	I move to recess for...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Register a complaint	I rise to a question of privilege ...	Yes	No	No	No	None
Require assembly to follow the schedule	I rise to call for the order of the day [or the regular order]	Yes	No	No	No	None
Postpone Discussion	I move lay [main motion] on the table.	No	Yes	No	No	Varies
Close debate and vote immediately	I move to close debate [or call the question]	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Limit or extend debate	I move to limit debate to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3
Postpone to certain time	I move to postpone the motion until ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Refer to committee	I move to refer the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Modify the motion	I move to amend the motion by ... 1) inserting or adding , if at the end, 2) striking or striking and inserting 3) substituting (an entire motion)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Bring business before assembly	I move that ... [a main motion]	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Incidental Motions - no order of precedence. Arise incidentally and decided immediately						
Submit matter to assembly	I appeal from the decision of the chair	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Suspend rules	I move to suspend the rule requiring	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Enforce rules	I rise to a point of order	Yes	No	No	No	None
Ask a question	Parliamentary inquiry ...	Yes	No	No	No	None
Object to Considering	I object to consideration of ...	Yes	No	No	No	Neg 2/3
Withdraw motion	I withdraw my motion (Before stated)	Yes	No	No	No	None
	I ask permission to withdraw the motion. (After being stated by Chair)	Yes	No	No	No	Majority
Read Papers	I ask for a reading of papers	No	No ¹	No	No	Majority
Divide motion	I request that the motion be divided	No	No	No	No	None
Demand rising vote	I call for a division of the assembly	Yes	No	No	No	None
Restorative Main Motions - no order of precedence. Introduce only when nothing else pending						
Amend previous action	I move to amend the motion ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Varies
Reconsider motion	I move to reconsider	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Cancel action	I move to rescind...	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Take from table	I move to resume consideration of ...	No	Yes	No	No	Majority

¹ Unless moved by the person requesting to read. Everyone has a right to have papers read at their introduction and before voting, if there has been any discussion.